

Texas Board of Legal Specialization CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

TBLS EMPOWERS MEMBERS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS AND ENSURES THAT THE PUBLIC HAS ACCESS TO THE VERY BEST LEGAL REPRESENTATION.

WRITTEN BY LEO FIGUEROA

2024 MARKS THE 50TH YEAR SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE TEXAS BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION. This significant milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on its journey, celebrate its achievements, and look forward to the future of attorney specialization. Since its founding, TBLS has been a leader in recognizing the need for specialized expertise in the legal profession. It was a pioneer, establishing the first specializations for attorneys in the state and laying the foundation for attorney certification. Today, TBLS is one of the largest attorney specialization programs in the country.

“The impact of TBLS certification extends far beyond individual attorneys. It matters to colleagues who rely on specialized expertise, to judges, and to clients who trust their attorneys with their most critical legal matters,” TBLS Board Chair Cynthia Barela Graham said. “Certification matters because it signifies a level of commitment and competence that sets our members apart in a competitive legal landscape.”

TBLS was established in 1974 by the Supreme Court of Texas as a part of the Texas Plan for Recognition and Regulation of Specialization in the Law, and the first three specialty areas (criminal, family, and labor) were realized in 1975. In this same year, the first group of lawyers who had substantial, relevant experience in these select areas of law completed continuing legal education hours in their specialty area and passed a

rigorous exam to obtain a certificate that was a physical manifestation of their expertise.

Today, TBLS certifies lawyers in 27 specialty areas, boasting more than 6,900 board-certified Texas attorneys with more than 8,010 certificates of special competence issued. TBLS has 890 dual board-certified lawyers and 50% have remained committed for over a decade. Additionally, since 1994, TBLS has expanded to certify almost 400 paralegals in eight specialty areas. With support from 200-plus board-certified volunteers, TBLS operates under the Supreme Court of Texas overseeing legal specialization.

Members have been instrumental in shaping the legacy of TBLS. By actively participating in TBLS and upholding the rigorous standards set forth by TBLS certification standards, they have elevated their own careers and promoted the availability, accessibility, and quality of legal services to the public.

As TBLS commemorates this 50-year milestone, gratitude is due to every attorney and paralegal who has

contributed to TBLS’ success. Their dedication to excellence and unwavering commitment to advancing the standards of the legal profession have shaped the organization and left a lasting impact on the legal community in Texas and beyond.

Looking ahead, the future of TBLS is bright. Since 2016, TBLS has added six new specialty areas, and it anticipates adding additional specialty areas in the coming years.

As TBLS continues to grow, it is confident that it will remain at the forefront of legal specialization, empowering members to achieve new heights of success and ensuring that the public has access to the very best legal representation. To learn more, go to tbsl.org. **TBJ**



LEO FIGUEROA

is the executive director of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization.

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