



## MY OPINION

BY BOB BLACK

PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF TEXAS

# Making a Resolution

Each year about this time, I sit down and reflect on my life. Being an organized soul, I have my past lists of New Year's resolutions. As I looked at them this year, I was struck by the sameness of my resolutions: lose weight (fill in the blank on number of pounds); win a fantasy baseball league (unfulfilled for several years now); make sure that the people I love and cherish know it; and keep control of my temper (alas, I have one).

Another resolution on most of my lists — and near the top of this year's — is gratitude. I am grateful in so many ways, but I wanted to thank you, the lawyers of Texas, for giving me the opportunity to serve in this most interesting role. Our profession is undergoing profound and rapid change. Times are very tough for many of us. Yet, our profession, ever-evolving, will endure, as we shall.

I am also grateful to the State Bar of Texas and to the Texas Young Lawyers Association. And one of my resolutions this year is to take advantage of more programs offered by the State Bar and TYLA.

One of the shining lights of the State Bar is the Texas Lawyers Assistance Program (TLAP). It provides confidential crisis counseling and referrals to those who experience substance abuse or mental health issues. The need is especially acute in challenging times. TLAP saves lives. If you or someone you love is having a hard time right now, call (800) 343-8527. It is free and it is confidential. In addition, the State Bar has two superb videos, developed by former State Bar Presidents Martha Dickie and Terry Tottenham: *Practicing from the Shadows* and *Practicing Law and Wellness*.

Another of my 2012 resolutions is to capitalize on the free CLE offered by the

State Bar: three hours a year! Every two months, the State Bar offers a free half-hour of CLE at [texasbarcle.com](http://texasbarcle.com). Less than 5 percent of us sign up, but it represents a great opportunity for timely, excellent — and free — CLE

### WHERE TO FIND THESE RESOURCES

- Casemaker can be accessed through My Bar Page on [texasbar.com](http://texasbar.com) or the homepage of [texasbarcle.com](http://texasbarcle.com).
- *Practicing in the Shadows* and *Practicing Law and Wellness* can be viewed on the TLAP webpage at [texasbar.com/tlap](http://texasbar.com/tlap).
- The Law Practice Management Program's free newsletter is available at [lpm-newsletter.blogspot.com](http://lpm-newsletter.blogspot.com) or on the Law Practice Management Program's web page at [texasbarcle.com](http://texasbarcle.com).
- *Office in a Flash* is available on the TYLA website at [tyla.org](http://tyla.org).
- Free CLE webcasts, including the *Practice Tips in Good Times and Bad* series are available at [texasbarcle.com/CLE/OCFree.asp](http://texasbarcle.com/CLE/OCFree.asp).
- Information about State Bar sections is available at [texasbar.com/sections](http://texasbar.com/sections).

In 2004, the State Bar launched Casemaker, a free online research source. It provides caselaw and statutes from all 50 states and has a federal library. Over the past two years, more than 25,000 of us have used this service. For sole practitioners and members of small firms, using this resource can save thousands of dollars. Users routinely praise this service. For those of us trying to practice smarter — and more economically — it is a great program.

For those starting out, there are numerous resources to help guide you.

Three excellent programs are the State Bar Law Practice Management Program, which publishes newsletters with timely tips; *Practice Tips in Good Times and Bad*, a series of webcasts designed to aid those of us struggling with these tough economic times; and TYLA's fantastic program, *Office in a Flash*. One flash drive contains specific and timely information about business plans, setting up accounts, and technology. In addition, it contains a free one hour of CLE! *Office in a Flash* is also available on the TYLA website at [tyla.org](http://tyla.org). See page 16 for more about how *Office in a Flash* has helped two young lawyers.

The sections of the State Bar also do great work on our behalf. One of the best things a lawyer can do is join a section. If you are interested in family law, join the Family Law Section. If you are interested in criminal law, join the Criminal Justice Section. I belong to the Litigation and ADR sections, and the materials I receive as a member keep me abreast of the law and of trends in my areas of practice concentration. The sections also elect representatives to the State Bar Board of Directors, where their advice, counsel, and guidance is sought.

Yes, I can confirm that my 2012 list contains resolutions pertaining to weight loss. And I really would like to win one of my two fantasy baseball leagues this year, especially since it is the last year for the Houston Astros in the National League. Spirituality is a constant quest. But I am also resolving to experience more of the many programs the State Bar offers. Free CLE, sign me up! Casemaker, here I come.

Happy New Year to you and those you cherish. May it be all you wish it to be. ✪