

STATE BAR *of* TEXAS ELECTION 2012

President-elect Candidates Discuss the Issues



Steve Bolden

Dallas



Lisa Tatum

San Antonio

The *Texas Bar Journal* asked 2012–2013 State Bar of Texas president-elect candidates **Steve Bolden** of Dallas and **Lisa Tatum** of San Antonio to share their perspectives on issues facing the State Bar of Texas. (Biographical information was included in the March issue, p. 182, and is available at texasbar.com.) Votes for the State Bar of Texas president-elect can be cast by paper ballot or online from April 2 to May 1, 2012. The deadline to cast ballots is May 1, 2012, at 5 p.m. CST.

Why do you want to serve as president of the State Bar of Texas?

BOLDEN I love being a lawyer every day! With everything our profession has done for me, it would be an honor to commit my energy and efforts to ensuring that the State Bar does even more to help Texas lawyers. These are difficult economic times. But no matter how challenging the times, one fact does not change: Texas lawyers, and the justice system to which they provide access, remain critical to Texans facing a host of challenges. I hope that my fellow Texas lawyers will give me the opportunity to work on their behalf and to serve both our profession and the public in this important role.

TATUM I love my profession and I am invested in the practice of law. I enjoy my work and I enjoy my service to the legal community. Serving as president of the State Bar of Texas presents a unique and challenging opportunity to contribute to the process that shapes and defines what we do as a legal community. At the urging of my mentors, I got involved in Bar service shortly after leaving the Bexar County District Attorney's Office for private practice in 2000. I actively participated because I wanted to better understand and address the issues that faced me as a practitioner. I stay involved because my participation enables me to help shape the direction we take as lawyers. I work with brilliant and dedicated lawyers, as well as amazing and committed members of the public, who also care about our legal community and the practice of law. My experience has shown that I am fortunate in having a real ability to effectively work with others to create and develop approaches and solutions to issues that face us. I want to put my passion for, my commitment to, and my experience in the legal community to work for our organization and in support of the lawyers of Texas.

Of the issues facing the legal profession, which three are most important to you personally and what is the State Bar's role in helping lawyers to address these issues?

BOLDEN First, we need to improve the services the State Bar provides to its members in challenging economic times and the way that the State Bar communicates with and incorporates the input of lawyers across the state. The State Bar has done an exemplary job in expanding programs to assist attorneys in meeting changing realities of the legal profession and helping lawyers who face issues such as depression and alcohol abuse. But we can do more. We can do more to ensure the availability of high-quality continuing legal education at reduced costs by utilizing new technology. We can do more to assist sole practitioners and members of small firms in competing in today's fast-changing legal environment, particularly in issues relating to the use of technology. We can do more to ensure our insurance products are competitively placed to offer our mem-

bers outstanding value. Perhaps most important, we need to reconnect with many Texas lawyers who have ceased to view the State Bar as an important part of their lives and practices. Too many Texas lawyers feel disconnected from the State Bar, believing they have no voice in its governance. As president, I will do everything in my power to ensure that every Texas lawyer feels empowered by and connected to the State Bar of Texas. We are all in this profession together; our profession will be at its zenith when it hears and heeds the voices of all of its members across our great state.

Second, we must continue to represent Texas lawyers in the public arena. The State Bar has made great strides over the past decade to advance public education about the rule of law and the important role lawyers play in preserving it. But I believe our efforts are most successful when directed at young people in their formative years. Recent efforts directed at educating our youth about the rule of law — and, most critically, the central role an independent judiciary plays in upholding it — will bear fruit in the long term and elevate public respect for our justice system and the legal profession. I want to continue and expand these programs, which have the ancillary benefit of helping produce high school graduates who are better prepared to be productive and involved citizens. Of course, these efforts also will bear fruit in increasing the number of women and minority lawyers in Texas. In time, we will have a legal profession that better reflects one of our greatest strengths in Texas, our diversity.

Finally, we must continue to take the lead in ensuring that even our poorest citizens have meaningful access to the justice system. Texas lawyers have done so much, probably more than their fair share, in addressing the access to justice crisis. But so much remains to be done. It is disheartening that so little public discourse has focused on access to justice. After all, no system of government like ours can endure if a vast segment of the citizenry lacks access to the justice system. And meaningful access to the justice system, in the vast majority of cases, necessitates legal representation. We as lawyers must take the lead in educating members of the public and our legislators, communicating that this is not a "lawyer problem," but it is a Texas problem.

In addressing this issue, I believe firmly that the main goal should be to help indigent citizens obtain legal representation. The best way to ensure access to justice is to ensure that everyone who needs a lawyer gets a lawyer.

TATUM *1. Lawyers are concerned about surviving and thriving in this economy.*

For some time now, I have been discussing with lawyers their concerns about surviving the economic downturn. With revenues down for so many lawyers, their focus has been on affordable continuing legal education in their practice areas, available research tools and academic resources, law practice resources for management and client development, and member benefits that help leverage costs for lawyers. The State Bar plays a vital role in providing member benefits. By leveraging

the economies of scale, the Bar can benefit lawyers in a way that lawyers and the majority of law firms cannot. The Bar must actively seek opportunities to increase and maximize the benefits for lawyers. The Bar must ask members what they need and want, respond to their expressed needs, and ensure that every member knows how to take advantage of all available benefits.

2. We need to do more to improve the public's perception of lawyers and the public's understanding of the value of lawyers in the legal process.

Recently I heard an attorney share a story about his experience when visiting a classroom of children. He asked the class to tell him what lawyers do. The first response he heard was, "Lawyers lie." Hearing about his experience made it real and perhaps more painful for me to accept a comment I overheard in line at the store: "Why should I pay a lawyer to do this when I can get the information I need to do it myself from the Internet for free?" Modern technology and globalization have led to a better-educated client. The information age enables a client, or potential client, to access the Internet, self-identify, and then address what he or she perceives to be a simple legal issue without individual legal guidance. Regardless of whether the person correctly understands the legal issues, the reality is that the public's perception of lawyers is not the same as lawyers' perceptions of themselves. Increased access to greater informational and legal resources can contribute to a decreased appreciation of the need for lawyers to answer an individual's questions and address his or her legal issues. The economic situations of many Texans increase the impetus to go it alone.

As lawyers, we walk a tightrope balancing the weight of our duty to our clients on one end of the pole and the weight of our duty to the public to do justice on the other end of the pole. It is sometimes a very difficult balance to keep. Depending upon the issues, the tightrope itself is higher above the ground and makes achieving a successful balance even more difficult. The public does not see or know the details of our private duties owed to clients. What the public does see is how we behave when we represent our clients and how we conduct ourselves. The public also sees how we contribute to or otherwise have an impact on the community.

We can control our image to a large degree. We must strive to improve the public's perception of our profession and demonstrate the added value and importance of a lawyer's role. As an organization, we can deliver an effective message to the public that can increase the public's understanding of the importance of the role of lawyers.

3. Lawyers belong to a mandatory bar that has little meaning for many of them because they feel it is not meaningful to them.

For far too many lawyers, the Bar has little usefulness or meaning. For many, the disconnect between the Supreme Court, the Bar, and the lawyers of Texas is very real. Too many lawyers have the opinion that the Bar is only about collecting dues and taxes and disciplining lawyers. Some members recognize the Bar's

purpose as one of self-governance. Many members see no reason to get involved in events, organizational activities, practice activities, or even voting in Bar leadership elections at any level. These are the perceptions from within our own organization.

I am hearing from Texas lawyers that many of us do not recognize the usefulness of the Bar. The State Bar must be relevant to all lawyers. Certainly the Bar cannot be all things to all lawyers, particularly at the same time. There are many issues that are practice-area specific, only some of which we may be able to address as an organization. Additionally, we ought not lose sight of the broader issues that affect us. In order to know what our members' concerns are, the Bar needs to hear from our members. Members need to be encouraged to take advantage of the available lines of communication to their Board representatives, sections, section liaisons, local bar leadership, Bar staff, and Bar leadership. We can all voice our concerns. Together we must ensure that the needs of lawyers are being met and the practice of law is healthy and strong. This means we must find ways to make the Bar meaningful to as many members as possible with a goal of being meaningful to every lawyer. This is an organization that exists for all Texas lawyers, and it must always work to do a more effective job of both conveying that and engaging more lawyers.

Each of you has served the profession in a number of capacities at a number of levels. Which of these experiences has best prepared you to lead the State Bar of Texas?

BOLDEN *1. My work as a lawyer.*

First and foremost, my experiences in legal practice have been invaluable in helping me to understand the issues facing both large-firm and small-firm lawyers. I began my legal career by working for two of the largest law firms in Texas: Jackson Walker, L.L.P. and Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer & Feld, L.L.P. Both of these firms are exceptional and provided me with tremendous education in the practice of law and the ethical responsibilities of lawyers. They also helped me to understand the unique issues facing lawyers in our largest firms. In 2008, in one of the most challenging economic climates for lawyers in decades, I made the difficult decision to leave Akin Gump and pursue a small firm practice at Mahomes Bolden, P.C. My experiences in helping manage a small firm in this economic climate helped me understand the unique challenges facing solo and small-firm lawyers. As I visit lawyers across Texas, I am grateful for experiences that help me understand the very different practices and issues facing big-firm and small-firm Texas lawyers.

2. My service to the profession.

Like most Texas lawyers, my interaction with the State Bar began through leadership roles in my local bar association and a State Bar section. These experiences helped form my opinions about Bar leadership. Serving as a section representative to the

State Bar of Texas Board of Directors and as chair of the Section Representatives to the Board Committee gave me a close-up look at the issues facing the State Bar and Texas lawyers. Representing the interests of sections also gave me the opportunity to meet and interact with many lawyers across Texas — and form the basis of my belief that our State Bar will be strengthened by empowering more of these lawyers. In particular, I have formed a strong belief in the power of listening — and honed my own ability to listen. This is a skill I will rely heavily upon if elected State Bar president.

TATUM My experience in the profession is somewhat unusual because of my diverse practice experience. Practicing law from the seat of a prosecutor, a local government lawyer, general counsel, a sole practitioner, a managing attorney, and a firm lawyer has given me different insights into and a strong appreciation for the unique needs and concerns of particular types of practices. These experiences also make it easier for me to understand the various perspectives lawyers bring from their different backgrounds and practices.

My Bar leadership experience is exceptionally broad. I have served as a leader in local bar work as well as state and national bar work. Each level of bar service challenged me and developed my leadership abilities to inspire, build consensus, cultivate teamwork, and effectively represent the face and the voice of an entire and diverse organization. The largest part of my bar service, seven years, has been to the State Bar of Texas and this, too, has prepared me to lead as president. I have worked with Bar staff, fellow volunteers, Bar leadership, and others in many aspects of the Bar over the years. I have an understanding and appreciation for the work of the staff and the role of the volunteers in Bar work. I am familiar with many of the programs and challenges of the Bar and with its mission.

Describe your most satisfying legal experience.

BOLDEN Actually, my most satisfying legal experience occurred before I was a lawyer! During my first year in law school, I assisted my father in obtaining his benefits as a totally disabled military veteran. Without a doubt, helping him obtain the benefits he earned through service was my most satisfying legal experience. The process was daunting in some respects but it was a blessing once it was accomplished. Unfortunately, there are many veterans who are not as fortunate and that is why I applaud the State Bar, the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA), and *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans* for their service to Texas veterans.

TATUM I get a great deal of satisfaction from helping clients reach their goals, especially when it involves crafting a creative solution. If I had to choose one experience, it would be a criminal case.

Although criminal law is no longer a primary practice area for me, some of my most memorable experiences are from my

days as a prosecutor. I was assigned to felony intake at the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. I was working up a murder case and had been going back and forth with the lead detective over factual issues that were of concern to me about the case. I spent a great deal of time with that detective, including observing additional witness interviews. The more we learned, the more concerns I had. We worked together to nail down as many facts as possible. It turned out that there was a previously undiscovered witness to the murder. Further investigation led to the identity of the actual killer. The man initially accused was the wrong guy. An innocent man was kept out of the criminal justice system because of judicious and persistent effort. The correct person was indicted by a grand jury. He was later convicted and sentenced to 30 years consecutively for his crimes.

What could or should the State Bar do to address the issues raised by the increasing number of self-represented litigants?

BOLDEN Initially, let me reiterate: Though some may view it as old-fashioned or unrealistic, I continue to believe that the goal should be to help as many Texans as possible obtain legal representation. Simply put, there is no substitute for representation by an attorney.

The question obviously focuses on the ongoing controversy concerning legal forms and the role they may play in assisting self-represented litigants. I believe the Executive Committee of the State Bar Board made the right decision in asking our Supreme Court to delay this initiative to permit additional study, input, and reflection.

Whatever the outcome of the debate over the use of forms, we could greatly assist self-represented litigants by increasing our support of local pro bono clinics. With minimal investment, we can provide better technological infrastructure and other support for local clinics that often serve as the first line of contact and support for self-represented litigants. Simply providing better computers and office machinery would make a difference to many of these clinics and the pro se litigants they help serve.

TATUM It is as if we have encountered a perfect storm. The increasing need for legal services to the poor, the increase in the number of self-represented litigants, and the related administrative issues facing the courts seem to have collided. One of the charges of the State Bar is to help address the need for legal services to the poor. The litigant that is self-represented because of an inability to pay for legal services is distinct from the litigant who chooses to proceed as a self-represented litigant and does have the means to pay for legal services. Each type of litigant brings a unique set of issues to practicing lawyers as well as to the courts' administrative systems. The issues will not go away without intervention. We, as the profession providing these legal services, are greatly affected by the increasing numbers and

must therefore be in the forefront of working to create approaches and solutions to this complex set of factors. This issue affects all of us as practitioners, and we should all be a part of creating a solution to the problem that faces us. I, like many of you, am trying to get my head around all of the issues, and I will take an active leadership stance to help our Bar create a solution or develop viable approaches to address this rapidly growing issue. We can work together through this set of issues and others as they arise.

What is one action the State Bar could take to educate the public about the rule of law and the role lawyers and judges play in our justice system?

BOLDEN Our past several State Bar presidents have all worked hard to enhance the public's understanding of the rule of law and appreciation of the role lawyers play in it. The most effective way to change the public's perception of lawyers is through efforts directed at young people in their formative years. After all, changing an adult's mind is tough. Young people are part of the technology age, and that is why I am so impressed by the present initiative to provide online resources, including high-quality original educational videos, related to important U.S. Supreme Court decisions. These should be the model for expanded educational content addressing the rule of law and the central role an independent judiciary and lawyers play in preserving it. We should also continue our support of mock trial programs, in which so many Texas students (and their parents) are forming an appreciation not just for the legal system, but also for the thousands of lawyers across Texas who volunteer their time and talents to support mock trial programs.

TATUM Continuing and expanding the public education initiatives carried out by the State Bar, TYLA, and the State Bar's Law-Related Education Department is a must. Increasing the number of lawyers willing to participate in the educational campaign will increase the positive impact we can have on the public. We can have an impact on the significance of the rule of law and add value to our roles in the justice system by doing our jobs well, by helping to educate the public about what we do, and by making a difference in our community through service.

Each of you have been involved in a number of community activities. Which one has been the most meaningful to you and why?

BOLDEN Serving on the board of First Tee of Dallas was my most meaningful community activity because it allowed me to affect the lives of many young people by introducing them to the game of golf. The educational programs of the First Tee are

designed to build character, instill life-enhancing values, and promote healthy choices through learning the discipline required by golf. It was incredibly fulfilling to be a part of the First Tee program and assist with achieving its mission.

TATUM The creation and development of the Y Living Program for the YMCA of Greater San Antonio is one of the most meaningful projects I have worked on. I have been on the Y Board since 2005 and involved with the YMCA since childhood. My father was on a branch board of management so it has been a lifelong involvement for me. I know how important the Y can be to a community. As a board member, working with the volunteers and staff, I helped develop a signature program that truly attends to the minds, bodies, and spirits of families. The program promotes healthy living as a lifestyle for the entire family. It addresses spiritual development, body image, fitness, healthy eating habits, fiscal fitness, goal setting, healthy decision-making, and spending quality time as a family. I have witnessed the positive impact that going through this program has had on the participants — increased fitness, the elimination of significant health issues, increased family time, and personal confidence. To see individuals and families go through and complete the program is indeed a true blessing.

What can the State Bar do to assist attorneys who are struggling under the pressures of a difficult economy?

BOLDEN The State Bar must continue to promote and enhance the Texas Bar Career Center. Despite some recent economic gains, many lawyers remain unemployed or underemployed. Lawyers must be made aware of the Career Center and be able to take advantage of its offerings. The State Bar must also continue to facilitate affordable CLE to assist lawyers with their continuing education needs, while at the same time providing them the most value for their hard-earned dollar.

TATUM The economic downturn began to really have an impact on the legal profession in 2008. This has been the deepest recession for the legal community since the 1980s. While things seem to be improving, we all realize that full recovery is going to be a long process. There are several ways that the State Bar can be a relevant resource to lawyers who may be struggling under the economic pressures:

1. Continue to provide relevant and affordable CLE, CLE scholarships, and free online legal research to lawyers;
2. Continue to leverage the Bar's purchasing power to benefit lawyers by delivering services and, to the extent possible, increasing those services without increasing the costs to members;
3. Facilitate and encourage the use of available practice

- resources, such as assistance with client development, law office management, and practice diversification;
4. Facilitate networking to find employment, to improve law office efficiency, and to build and grow a practice;
 5. Continue to provide valuable assistance to lawyers facing mental health and substance abuse issues through our Bar programs such as the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program (TLAP) and informational materials, such as the *Practicing from the Shadows* video;
 6. Continue to advocate for lawyers and the issues attorneys face; and
 7. Continue to help and support lawyers and local bars to address the need for legal services to the poor in their communities as they create and adopt programs such as the Community Justice Program, law clinics, and the LegalLine program.

How do you think the State Bar is doing at policing the profession? What could the State Bar do to educate the public about the lawyer discipline system?

BOLDEN On the whole, I think the State Bar does an excellent job of policing the profession. But there is always room for improvement. One of the State Bar's truly outstanding programs is the Client Security Fund. I would support increasing that fund to permit compensation of more clients. Additionally, we must do more to publicize the existence of the fund — too many Texas lawyers and clients do not even realize the fund exists.

With respect to the grievance process, we need to do a better job of explaining the summary disposition process to members of the public who file grievances. Without any sort of hearing or face-to-face meeting, they may feel their grievances are not carefully considered. We could better explain that to the contrary, each grievance is reviewed by a panel consisting of lawyer and non-lawyer members. We should also continue existing efforts to publicize the existence of the grievance process, especially online. Any member of the public visiting the State Bar's website, or performing an online search of resources available to address misconduct, should easily find a link to information about the grievance process.

TATUM Our disciplinary system serves both to protect the public and our profession, as well as the rights of attorneys who are accused of rule violations. The State Bar does a very good job administering the disciplinary process. Chief Disciplinary Counsel Linda Acevedo, her staff, and the Commission for Lawyer Discipline diligently monitor the disciplinary function of the Bar and regularly assess the ways the disciplinary process can be improved. The centralized process and the most recent changes that established and refined the Grievance Referral Program have continued to improve the process. A diversionary effort, the Grievance Referral Program has enhanced the Chief

Disciplinary Counsel's ability to identify and remediate attorney conduct through Bar programs and through tailored rehabilitative conditions on practice to address the conduct that led to the grievance being filed. Successful completion of the Grievance Referral Program keeps the attorney out of the disciplinary system. Our disciplinary process is also designed to help attorneys who need help and may be suffering from an impairment or disability caused by mental health or substance abuse issues or disorders.

The process is not perfect. It is not surprising that there are some issues, opinions, and decisions about which attorneys differ. The Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office (CDC) has given and continues to give thoughtful consideration to determine how the process will address such decisions. The CDC is not the only entity seeking a better understanding.

Additionally, barratry cases seem to be on the increase. Barratry has been very difficult in the investigatory stage for our disciplinary process to address without subpoena power and the ability to compel testimony.

The State Bar, assisted by staff and volunteers, takes many opportunities to educate lawyers about and assist lawyers with issues that can lead to a grievance being filed. For example, I have participated in a panel discussion with CDC trial attorneys on how to avoid a grievance. For the public, information is available in our brochures and online. The Bar's website was revised to make it easier for the public to access information about the disciplinary process and the rules, as well as acquire the grievance form. This information is available in English and in Spanish. The grievance form itself encourages a complainant to contact the Client-Attorney Assistance Program (CAAP) prior to filing a formal grievance in hopes that the Bar staff can help address minor issues more immediately.

Information on how to file a grievance is shared with all county and district clerk's offices, law libraries, legal aid organizations, local bar associations, federal public defender's offices, and prisons. As an organization, we will continue to reach out to lawyers and the public through the CDC, TLAP, and CAAP. Taking this action should aid lawyers and their clients and, consequently, protect the public and our profession.

How can the State Bar enhance ethics and professionalism within the profession?

BOLDEN First, increased emphasis of the Texas Lawyer's Creed — especially with new lawyers not previously acquainted with it — will enhance the ethical behavior of lawyers. The Lawyer's Creed serves as a template for ethical and honorable conduct by an attorney, and we can do more to make the Lawyer's Creed a "go-to" resource for lawyers in their daily professional lives. As a young lawyer, my supervising attorneys helped me understand that adherence to the Lawyer's Creed was a baseline for acceptable conduct by a Texas lawyer. We need to be vigilant in

reminding all Texas lawyers of this baseline — and in ensuring that younger lawyers are prepared to pass that message on to those who follow them into our profession.

Second, we must find ways to ensure that all young Texas lawyers — not just those practicing in firms with more experienced lawyers — have appropriate mentors. I was blessed in my career to work under the supervision of exceptional mentors. Without them, I surely would not have this amazing opportunity to serve our profession. Even the most well-educated and skilled young lawyers need mentoring from more experienced members of the profession. Recent developments in technology make it possible to connect lawyers and mentors even in remote geographic areas. Doing more to connect young lawyers with mentors will enhance the ethics and professionalism of an entire generation of Texas lawyers.

TATUM There is little that compares to a good first impression except, perhaps, to be continually impressed by the integrity of an attorney. One of the easiest ways we can improve our profession and our image is to promote and uphold ethical behavior and the high principles of professionalism. And we must strive to enhance our sense of personally being a member of a professional community. Most of us respond to the approval or disapproval of our peers and conform our behavior accordingly. Our increased numbers, billing pressures, and the use of modern technology often seem to work against our sense of being a member of a valued community. Many of us have sacrificed a telephone call for an email. We need to be ever mindful not to allow an electronic delivery, text, or post to strip away the personal contact that makes our role as attorneys unique and humanizes as well as personalizes our profession and the attorney experience.

I have long been a proponent of mentoring. I have been blessed with many great mentors and to be a mentor. We need to teach ethical conduct in formal and informal settings. We must encourage professionalism and ethical behavior. Professionalism and ethical behavior begins and ends with the individual lawyer. We must change school children's responses to questions about what lawyers do from "Lawyers lie." Collectively, we must cultivate good habits that keep us focused on professionalism, effective communication, and interaction and fellowship among attorneys, and we must promote the high standards for which we would like to be regarded. Professionalism must be taught and reinforced always; professionalism must be honored, recognized, and emulated.

What can the State Bar do to promote diversity within the legal profession?

BOLDEN I have served on the Steering Committee for the Texas Minority Counsel Program (TMCP) for the past couple of years and have participated in the TMCP over the past five years. The State Bar does an excellent job with this program

and it continues to get better every year. We must continue to support and expand TMCP as well as the Texas Minority Attorney Program; both have assisted so many women and minority lawyers in advancing their careers and in becoming better lawyers. Additionally, the State Bar's leadership academy is another excellent program that is helping prepare women and minority lawyers for leadership roles in the State Bar over the coming years.

TATUM The many faces that comprise the Bar have changed significantly over the years. There are more women practicing law. There are more minorities practicing law. The faces that comprise our general population are also changing, and our profession should reflect the population we serve. Diversity works. We are a stronger and more effective Bar when we have lawyers who come from diverse economic, geographic, cultural, social, and practice backgrounds. Attorney diversity in Bar discussions, participation, and leadership enables us to collectively address the issues that arise and confront our organization. It also allows us to create and take innovative steps to enhance and advance our legal community. The greater the diversity of the attorneys involved, the better equipped we are to address the issues that come before us and to set a course for our future.

In keeping with our commitment to diversity, we must recruit lawyers, regardless of their background or practice characteristics, to actively participate in local and state bar activities and in leadership roles so that all of our voices can be heard. We need to mentor law students with an emphasis on diversity. We have a responsibility to increase the effectiveness with which we feed the pipeline of lawyers in light of the rising cost of education and the consequently shrinking opportunity to pursue higher education.

Are there segments of the Bar whose needs are not being met by the State Bar? How can the State Bar ensure it is responsive and relevant to its members?

BOLDEN Two groups concern me in connection with under-service by the State Bar. First, many Texas lawyers feel disconnected from the State Bar and thus do not take advantage of the vast offerings the State Bar has to assist them in their personal and professional lives. We must do a better job of reconnecting with these lawyers. The relationship between the State Bar and its members is symbiotic; the greater the number of lawyers actively connected to and participating in the State Bar, the more benefits the State Bar can offer to its member lawyers. Particularly among sole practitioners, there is no reason for these members not to be taking advantage of outstanding vendor discounts, competitive health and life insurance policies, and the many other resources the State Bar has to enhance the lives and practices of Texas lawyers and their families.

The second group I worry about is that of newly admitted lawyers, particularly those unable to obtain immediate employment. Far too many recent graduates are being thrust into solo practice lacking experience or mentorship. Both for the success of our profession and the protection of the public, it is imperative that the State Bar do everything in its power to reach out to these newly minted lawyers and help connect them to mentors, ensure they obtain the necessary continuing legal education to ensure their competence in practice, and help them understand — beyond what they learned from law school books — what it means to be a lawyer. These young lawyers generally are eager to learn and be involved; the challenge simply is reaching out to them.

Of course, being the son of a disabled veteran, I am always concerned about what the State Bar is doing to assist military lawyers and veterans, two traditionally underserved groups. The State Bar has made exceptional strides in recent years, both in its assistance to active military lawyers and its tremendous recent efforts on behalf of Texas veterans. We must continue these efforts to ensure that those who have given and continue to give so much to ensure our safety and security are well-served by the State Bar.

As for how the Bar can ensure it is responsive and relevant to its members, the question contains the key word: relevant. Too many Texas lawyers still do not see the relevance of the State Bar to their lives and practices. Although the State Bar provides exceptional services for and on behalf of Texas lawyers and their families every day, we can do a better job of letting our members know about these services and how to take advantage of them. For example, many members do not take advantage of excellent vendor discounts, competitively priced insurance products, and outstanding educational resources for our children. We can also do more to assist Texas lawyers in adapting to a rapidly changing legal environment. Some days, it seems as though everyone in our profession is in some sort of transition — lawyers leave large firms to form small firms or leave firms entirely to go in-house or solo, and even big firms are in transition as they become mega-firms. We need to position the State Bar as a “go-to” resource for lawyers in transition.

TATUM My answer might have been significantly different if you had asked that question of me six years or so ago. Over the years, the State Bar has improved its attention to various segments of the Bar. Through strong attorney advocates and responsive and dedicated leadership, the role of the Section Representative has increased; the role of Minority Director has improved; new sections have formed, such as the Poverty Law Section; and the sensitivity to and awareness of the needs of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender attorneys have been heightened. The needs I have become aware of recently are more closely tied to practice-area segments.

As the recent concerns of members arise, the Bar has been increasingly receptive and responsive. The Bar’s responsiveness,

to our concerns and needs, must continue to be prompt. As an organization, the State Bar cannot afford to fail to be there when our members call.

What advice would you give to a newly licensed attorney?

BOLDEN Find a mentor! And I do emphasize “find,” because too often young lawyers rely on a mentor to find them. Young lawyers must take it upon themselves to enhance their careers by seeking out appropriate mentors. Second, don’t undervalue the importance of continuing legal education. Especially in your first years of practice, exceed the required 15 hours. Finally, get involved in local and state bar leadership. You will make invaluable connections, meet and learn from some of the best lawyers in Texas, and be a part of helping to shape our profession for the 21st century. Remember, it’s your State Bar, too!

TATUM I encourage every newly licensed lawyer to surround themselves with mentors. Seek mentors whom you admire and respect. They do not all have to look like you, like all the things that you like, or even be lawyers. Do have several mentors who are lawyers. Be diverse in your selection, but choose them because you believe you can learn from them about how to be a better person and attorney. Make sure you learn all that you can about your Bar member benefits. There are discounts, section memberships, and practice resources, tips, and tools. Know how to take advantage of all of them. Do not run out and spend a great deal of money now that you are licensed. Get a handle on your budget and new expenses first, particularly if you have loans or other debt. You can learn simply by observing. Learn what to do and what not to do — certainly remember what not to do. Lastly, have fun. Go forth and enjoy being a lawyer.

What do you do for fun?

BOLDEN When the opportunity presents itself, I enjoy taking my daughter and son out to play a round of golf; occasionally, my wife, Tonya, joins us, too. It’s a lot of fun being out there together as a family. I’m also an avid reader and am generally reading two to three books at any given time.

TATUM I love to travel. Fellowship with family and friends is important to me. I welcome a getaway to the great outdoors as much as I enjoy taking in the arts. Like many lawyers, I probably spend far too much time working and not enough at rest or play. As time permits, I take extended time out of the country. For shorter trips, I like to visit family and friends across the country. I sneak away for quick excursions to the Hill Country, the coast, state parks, and the museum and theatre districts. Sometimes it is just nice to put it into second gear and stay home. ☺