



MY OPINION

BY BOB BLACK

PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF TEXAS

Serving You, Serving the Public

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you as president of the State Bar of Texas. It has been a fascinating journey, the memories of which I will cherish for the rest of my life. It has also been a lot of fun. My favorite occasions have been visiting bar associations across the state. Lawyers are resilient, smart, engaged, opinionated, and funny. And, boy, do lawyers ask good questions!

My efforts as president have centered on education of the public, preservation of our rich historical legacy, on serving you the members of the State Bar, and on articulating the importance of a unified bar with self-governance for lawyers.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

I am convinced that some of our profession's reputational issues relate to a lack of understanding of the role of the judiciary and how we as lawyers serve the judicial branch. I realized early on that we needed to focus on our schools and on teaching kids basic civics.

We developed *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!* Civics Resources for Texas Students and Teachers to provide teachers across the state with a website (texasbar.com/civics) full of helpful resources and entertaining videos geared to middle school students about seminal Supreme Court cases that illustrate the independence and equality of the judicial branch. We have provided the videos to thousands of teachers and the reception has been extremely enthusiastic. In the coming Bar year, several new videos designed for high school students will be unveiled. We have a multi-year opportunity to reach a generation of students about what we do and why it is so important to our democratic process.

We have also reached out to adults in civic groups with *We Are Lawyers*, an inspiring video about the many contributions and successes of our profession. As kids and adults learn about the judiciary and the role of lawyers, I believe they reach a better understanding of our judicial system. In turn, it will improve the reputation of our profession over time.

PRESERVATION OF OUR LEGAL HERITAGE

As many of you know, I am a history junkie. And I am not alone! In my travels across Texas, I have visited with hundreds of others who share my passion for our rich legal heritage.

This year, the State Bar joined forces with the Texas Court Records Preservation Task Force, appointed by the Supreme Court, to identify and preserve important legal records. So far, 21 important records have been preserved. They illustrate how much we have in common with past generations as similar issues reverberate over the decades. These records are a treasure trove of fascinating material with which to educate everyone, including the public, about the crucial role we as lawyers play in our democratic process.

At the Annual Meeting in June in Houston, you can see the preserved records and learn about the events they embody. These records were the focus of the March issue of the *Texas Bar Journal* and I hope you enjoyed it.

SERVING YOU

It has been my privilege to serve you during the toughest economic times of my 32 years as a lawyer. It has been especially important to me to make sure you

know that the State Bar of Texas is focused on serving you and the public. The Bar's overhead is only 20 percent. The balance goes to programming efforts. Believe me, that compares favorably with all other state bar associations.

In addition, we are focused on providing you with quality and cost-effective CLE, with up to three hours a year free. We are working hard to improve member benefits, including insurance options. Moreover, we are accountable and transparent. We are tireless in our efforts to improve the value you receive as a member of the State Bar.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-GOVERNANCE AND A UNIFIED BAR

Across Texas, I have championed self-governance for lawyers and discussed why the profession requires a unified bar. As lawyers, we have done a terrific job governing ourselves. We police our profession vigilantly and have an excellent grievance system. We use our resources wisely, keeping costs down (no dues increase in more than 20 years), and are focused on providing value for our members and the public. A key to self-governance is our right to vote on our leaders and in referendums. I am proud of our profession and the job we do.

SAYING GOODBYE

I leave you in the capable hands of my successor, Buck Files. He will do an excellent job. As I depart office next month, thank you again for giving me the opportunity to serve you, the profession, and the public. It has been a wonderful journey and a great privilege.