

# MY OPINION

BY BUCK FILES

PRESIDENT, STATE BAR OF TEXAS

## A Year of Accomplishments

On November 11, I participated in the New Lawyers Induction Ceremony at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin. We added 2,109 names to our roster and the State Bar now has a membership of 91,686 lawyers. When I took my oath as a new lawyer in 1963, there was room in the courtroom of the Supreme Court for all of us new lawyers — and our families and friends. Then, the number of lawyers in Texas was between 15,000 and 16,000 — which is where Dallas County is today. And the State Bar of Texas, although 24 years old then, did not resemble what it is today.

State Bar Executive Director Michelle Hunter and the Senior Management Team are committed to keeping our operations lean and efficient. The State Bar now has 268 employees as compared to 1999 when there were 65,000 lawyers and a staff of 324. The State Bar has a reputation for being a great place to work and morale among the employees is high. Importantly, all of this has permitted the State Bar to continue for more than 20 years without having to come back to the membership for a dues increase.

As 2012 is winding down, I have looked at what the State Bar has accomplished during 2012 — and I'm proud of what I see:

- Our *Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans* continues to be a work in progress. 6,000 veterans have received the legal representation which they so deserved through the efforts of more than 2,300 Texas lawyers.
- Approximately 50 percent of our lawyers will have provided over 2 million hours of legal or indirect services to the poor this year.
- As part of our *Oyez, Oyez, Oh Yay!* initiative, our Law Related Education department is completing all of the DVDs focusing on the 24 court cases

required for public school exit tests. Over this past year, 6,800 teachers received training from the State Bar which will positively impact 450,000 students.

- Our Client Security Fund Subcommittee reviewed 131 applications for help as a result of the misconduct of Texas lawyers. Ninety-eight were approved and \$640,604 was returned to 15 victims of attorney theft and to 83 who had not received a refund on unearned fees.
- To date, Lawyer Referral Information Service has made 54,461 referrals, with 40 percent going to participating attorneys, 36 percent to local referral programs, and 24 percent to other resources.
- Our *Texas Bar Journal* continues to get rave reviews because of the new breadth of articles and the continued work of its editorial board, led by Michael Smith.

- Our committees are working well for the good of our Texas lawyers; e.g., Rockwall County District Attorney Kenda Cullpepper's Professionalism Committee is serving as a task force to review issues related to ethics, professionalism, civility, and The Texas Lawyer's Creed and to make recommendations as to what the State Bar needs to do over the next several years in response to these issues.
- Our 47 sections are comprised of more than 38,000 Texas Lawyers. I am heartened that more than one third of our lawyers are supporting the work of our sections.

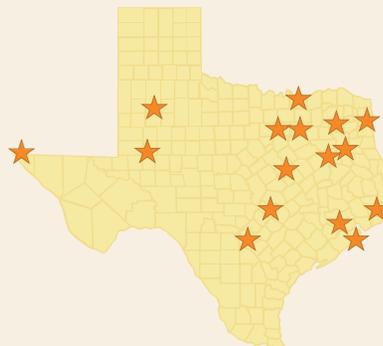
There are so many other successes, but I'm limited on the number of words in my column.

I hear so often, "I didn't know that the State Bar did this." If you have a question or a need, please ask. We're here for you. ✪

## MYTHBUSTERS

**The Myth:** The State Bar President stays in Austin at the Texas Law Center and does not meet with constituents throughout the state to learn how the Bar can better serve Texas lawyers and the public.

**The Problem:** The Texas Law Center, the State Bar's headquarters, is located in Austin. Some attorneys believe that the State Bar President only conducts official Bar business at the Texas Law Center and does not connect with lawyers throughout the state.



**The Truth:** The State Bar President travels throughout the state to meet with Texas lawyers to learn how the Bar can better serve its members and the public. Since taking office in June, Buck Files has traveled to Austin, Beaumont, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Galveston, Houston, Jefferson, Lubbock, Midland, Palestine, Quitman, Rusk, San Antonio, Sherman, and Waco to meet with lawyers and judges.