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Agricultural Tourists

Just a little note to say I enjoyed the articles on agricultural law (May, p. 372). My work does not take me to those subjects so I felt like a tourist in an interesting area. Such articles help me to appreciate the broader vision of what we collectively refer to as the “body of the law.” Thank you.

Stanley Santire
Houston

I appreciated the agricultural law issue. I passed the articles on to a non-lawyer friend of mine who is a longtime rancher. I am sure he’ll be even more appreciative.

Carl Robin Teague
San Antonio

Overreaching, Overbearing

While I think it is a fine and important thing to donate one’s time, energy, expertise, or money to the charitable causes of his or her choice, I also think that the State Bar of Texas has overreached in its effort to pressure Texas lawyers into supporting access to justice. Asking for donations is fine, and providing an easy way for members to make a charitable donation on the bar dues statement is convenient. However, I think it is out of line for our State Bar president to suggest that a \$150 minimum donation is expected (“Let Me Make This Clear,”

May, p. 360). Roland Johnson quoted the Preamble to the Texas Lawyers Creed to support his personal opinion that not opting out of making the suggested donation is the right thing to do, implying that opting out would be wrong, viz., “Doing right ... means leaving the dues statement alone. ...”

How presumptuous of him to instruct us on the right thing to do with our private property! And how overbearing to have changed the bar dues statement format so that members must “opt out” if they do not choose to donate! The State Bar should remember that its members are still at personal liberty and discretion to decide whether or not to donate their private property to its legal services charity. If the State Bar hopes to boost its access to justice success rate above 5 percent, perhaps it should try seeking donations with more appropriate humility.

John T. Detmar
Fredericksburg

Injustices of the Peace

How long will Texans be harmed by someone with a background as an owner of a grocery store or hair styling salon sitting as judge of a justice court? When the maximum jurisdiction was \$200, it may have made sense. Now it’s \$10,000 and an incorrect judgment can destroy a family. Sure, they can appeal, but usually they aren’t in a financial position to afford such “justice,” especially when they should have received it from a judge who knew the law to start with. Sure, the same can be said for higher level courts, but not to the extent of justice courts.

I have seen erroneous rulings on evidence that resulted in exclusion of perfectly valid evidence and rulings that permitted what amounted to expert testimony because the litigant quoted from a book checked out from the library. Too many of these “judges” demonstrate a

total lack of understanding of their jurisdiction and basic law. The justice courts were designed for small issues of little monetary consequence and rapid disposition. Now, we have large issues with large money at risk and rapid disposition out of judges who don’t know the law.

It’s time we get behind a bill that requires judges of justice courts to be attorneys. The old way is far outdated. If we cannot change the requirement, at least get the damage factor the court can inflict back to \$200.

Don Feare
Arlington

State of the Union

President Obama’s attack on the U.S. Supreme Court during the State of the Union Address was a despicable and cowardly act. It was an affront to every member of the bar. Regardless of the merits of the Court opinion referred to by Mr. Obama, the State of the Union address is not a forum for the president to lash out and humiliate the judicial branch of government.

Victor Segura
Sugar Land

Bare Minimum Not Enough

David Fisher’s essay in the March issue (“Elevating the Rule of Right,” p. 168) is the best article I have ever read in your magazine. There are few messages that our society needs more than his: What is *legal* merely sets the lowest minimum standard our society will tolerate. It is far below what we need to grow and prosper as a people. While our duty as attorneys is to inform clients of legal limits, in giving our advice and in our own lives we should not pretend that to do what is barely legal is to do what is right.

John A. Evans
Katy