



# PRACTICING BEST PRACTICES

As I write this column, we've just received the final reports from the State Bar of Texas' 2017 fiscal year internal audit. The auditors found no areas of noncompliance. In fact, the findings are quite positive.

The CPA firm of McConnell & Jones conducted the audit, which focused on the State Bar's compliance with the Public Funds Investment Act and the statutes, rules, and policy provisions related to the following State Bar departments: Membership, Advertising Review, Budget and Finance, Purchasing and Facilities, and Information Technology.

The audit reports are available on the State Bar website at [texasbar.com/finances](http://texasbar.com/finances). Some highlights:

- The Information Technology Department has implemented some of the industry's best practices with regard to website usability and security. The report describes the My Bar Page member portal as "robust and easy to use."
- The State Bar procures a majority of its materials and services under the Comptroller of Public Accounts procurement contracts for goods and services provided by the comptroller. "This saves [State Bar] resources, ensures compliance with state procurement requirements, and increases efficiencies in the procurement process."
- The Membership Department's efforts to promote e-billing and online payments are saving money and making our billing processes more efficient. E-billing statements increased from 4,200 in fiscal year 2016 to more than 34,000 in fiscal year 2018. Online payments now make up 57 percent of the department's transactions, up from 50 percent two years ago. (Thank you to everyone who pays dues online.)
- The Advertising Review Department is described as "very customer service oriented," based on the auditors' interviews and document reviews. Instead of just rejecting an advertisement for not complying with the rules, the staff tries to work with lawyers to help them gain compliance within the rules—a fact that impressed the auditors. (The Advertising Review Committee is currently working to make our ad review process even more user-friendly. Stay tuned.)

Two words stand out as I read the audit reports: best practices. The reports highlight areas where the State Bar of Texas has adopted best practices to better serve our members and the public. The audit period ended just before I started as executive director in December, but I am committed to continuing the State Bar's pursuit of best practices in everything we do.

## **CLE Scholarships Available**

Another way the State Bar of Texas serves its members is by making sure cost isn't a barrier to receiving high-quality CLE. TexasBarCLE offers scholarships for live courses, video replays, and online classes and webcasts by filling out the form at [texasbarcle.com/scholarship](http://texasbarcle.com/scholarship). The scholarship is open to any attorney who hasn't already accumulated 15 or more hours of accredited CLE during his or her MCLE reporting year. TexasBarCLE approved more than 500 scholarship applications last year that provided more than \$200,000 worth of high-quality CLE to Texas lawyers. If you're interested, please don't hesitate to apply.

Sincerely,

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*Have a question for Trey? Email it to [trey.apffel@texasbar.com](mailto:trey.apffel@texasbar.com) and he may answer it in a future column.*