

## Summer Review

It has been another busy summer for the State Bar of Texas. We held an outstanding Annual Meeting in Houston, hosted local and specialty bar leaders from across the state at our Bar Leaders Conference in Austin, launched a podcast with Legal Talk Network, and watched an Astros-Rangers baseball game in Arlington to raise money for veterans' legal services.

We also closely watched developments along the southern border and served as a clearinghouse of information and volunteer opportunities for lawyers who wanted to get involved. (See State Bar President Joe K. Longley's column on Page 584 for more information on the border volunteer efforts.)

I'm using my September column to update you on these developments—and to respond to questions I received about my June column on health insurance.

### Annual Meeting and Podcast Update

The 2018 State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting attracted more than 1,600 attendees to Houston for two days of engaging CLE sessions and networking opportunities. Putting on an event this size is a major undertaking, so I want to thank everyone involved, including the Houston-based Annual Meeting Committee; all of our speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees; the many State Bar sections that organized CLE breakout; and the entire State Bar staff—starting with Marketing and Outreach Manager Susan Brennan and her team.

If you weren't in Houston with us, then I have the next best thing to offer you. In addition to our Annual Meeting coverage in the *Texas Bar Journal*, which starts on Page 594, you can listen to many of the speakers share key points from their Annual Meeting presentations on a series of 13 special episodes of the *State Bar of Texas Podcast*.

These episodes were recorded onsite with host Rocky Dhir and include interviews with Craig Ball on preserving mobile device data, Donna Serdula on how to build your LinkedIn profile, Ron Chichester on AI's impact on jobs, and Tiffany Haas and Johanna Schroeder on how to work with and retain paralegals. You can also hear updates from the State Bar and Texas Young Lawyers Association from 2016-2017 State Bar President Frank Stevenson, 2018-2019 TYLA President Sally Pretorius, and State Bar Directors Erich Birch and Rudy Metayer. Listen to the podcast at [texasbar.com/podcast](http://texasbar.com/podcast), [legaltalknetwork.com](http://legaltalknetwork.com), or through Apple Podcasts and Google Play.



### Law Night at the Ballpark

I'm pleased to report that nearly 200 people bought tickets to watch the World Champion Houston Astros play the Texas Rangers on July 3 in Arlington through the State Bar's Law Night at the Ballpark event.



(I'm also happy to report that my Astros beat the Rangers, 5-3.) For every ticket purchased through our event, a \$5 donation was made to the Texas Access to Justice Foundation's Joe Jamail Endowment for Veteran Legal Services. Thank you to everyone who attended the game, and to the Texas Rangers for offering us this opportunity at no cost to the State Bar.

### Members Health Plan

Finally, my June column focused on the Members Health Plan, a new member-owned group health plan launched by Texas Member Benefits Inc., the company that administers the Texas Bar Private Insurance Exchange. As I explained in June, the plan is listed as an option in the exchange and may provide attractive rates to some members, including solo practitioners with at least one additional full-time employee. To date, the new option has generated a lot of excitement and many firms are starting to participate.

A number of members wrote or called me to ask why the plan doesn't cover solos with no full-time employees. The short answer is this: Adding solos to the plan is a high priority for everyone involved with the plan, but it's not economically viable to do so yet.

Chip Trefry, president of Texas Member Benefits Inc., explained it this way: "Solvency is of the utmost importance to us and to the Texas Department of Insurance, particularly during the first 12 months of operation as we build up participation to support the immediate flow of claims. Every expert that is working on this project has indicated how essential it is to control risk, especially during the first 12 months. If not, adverse claims can potentially destroy the plan by exhausting the reserves before it even gets off the ground."

Risk management and regulatory factors come into play when considering who is eligible to participate in the plan, Trefry said. "Currently our group eligibility requirements are consistent with other fully insured carriers in the small group health market in Texas. Our goal is that over time, we can develop additional Members Health Plan options that cover as much of the total membership as possible, including solos with no full-time employees. At that time, we intend to work with the Texas Department of Insurance to bring those options to the membership."

The State Bar will keep you posted as Member Benefits Inc. continues to roll out new insurance offerings.

Sincerely,

### TREY APFEL

Executive Director, State Bar of Texas  
Editor-in-Chief, *Texas Bar Journal*  
(512) 427-1500  
@AppfelT on Twitter

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.