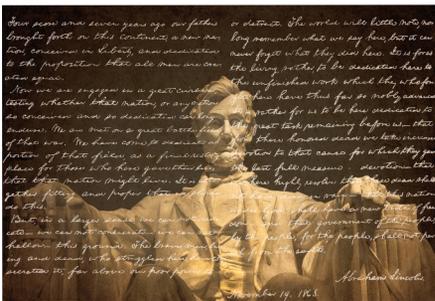




Of the Lawyers, By the Lawyers, and For the Lawyers

Every Fourth of July, we celebrate the birth of our nation and the greatest form of government ever imagined—democracy. Abraham Lincoln noted in his Gettysburg Address that soldiers had sacrificed their lives so “that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Shouldn’t our profession be governed in a similar manner—of the lawyers, by the lawyers, and for the lawyers?

For the past 80 years, Texas lawyers have regulated and governed Texas lawyers. But today some seek to dismantle and eliminate our State Bar, complaining some of our programs and policies violate their constitutional rights.¹ I believe the elimination of our State Bar is not in our best interest and here is why:



Of the lawyers

Lawyers are in the best position to identify and address evolving and fast-moving lawyer related issues. There are 46 elected and appointed active board members that make up our governing “legislative body.” Thirty of these are elected from 17 geographical districts across the state. Members of our board of directors are from your community and directly shape the governance of our profession. The State Bar of Texas is “of the lawyers.”

Would those objectors to our current system prefer the Texas Legislature (that meets every two years) regulate and govern lawyers? Would they want to entrust these obligations to the executive branch? Or should lawyers continue to work closely with

the judiciary in our governance? I submit this third option makes the most sense. From the judges in our smallest county to the 18 judicial officers on our two highest courts, our state’s judiciary already plays an integral role in the governing of our profession.

By the lawyers

Much of our bar’s work is done “by the lawyers”—dedicated volunteer lawyers on committees, sections, and our Texas Young Lawyers Association who make up the heart of our organization. Our State Bar is often described as the best in the country because of the ingenuity, foresight, and commitment of our volunteers. We have a self-interest in improving our calling. It is hard to imagine non-lawyers would do a better job with our profession’s future.

For the lawyers

Trey Appfel was a solo practitioner for 35 years before becoming the State Bar’s executive director in December 2017. He knows the lawyers of Texas want a State Bar that is for our lawyers. The goals of the professionals at the State Bar who work under Trey, as well as the goals of so many volunteer lawyers, are to improve and advance the legal profession and the lives of lawyers and help us better serve our clients. Lawyers know what lawyers want and what lawyers need. We should remain a State Bar “for the lawyers.”

The idea of a State Bar of Texas that was of the lawyers, by the lawyers, and for the lawyers was the right form of governance when it was established by our Texas Legislature in 1939. And it still is today.

RANDY SORRELS

2019-2020 President, State Bar of Texas

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NOTE

1. To read the State Bar’s response and related filings in *McDonald v. Longley*, go to texasbar.com/mcdonaldvlongley.