



AS USUAL, LAWYERS ARE RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

We've seen it many times before. A crisis hits and lawyers step up to meet it head-on. I'm thinking of the rush of unaccompanied minor cases in 2014, when I was State Bar president; Hurricane Harvey in 2017; and a number of other natural disasters since. In every case, Texas lawyers have been there to solve problems, to help each other, and to serve their fellow Texans.

Today, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic, lawyers who are busy managing their own lives and practices are still selflessly volunteering their services. The Texas Bar Blog recently highlighted some of these efforts—firms offering pro bono help for small-business owners applying for disaster loans or laid-off workers seeking unemployment benefits. Meanwhile, local bar associations are helping organize virtual legal clinics, virtual food drives for community pantries, and virtual supply drives for senior centers.

Texas' legal services and access to justice organizations have joined with the State Bar to help low-income Texans with civil legal problems resulting from the pandemic. These partners are promoting the State Bar's statewide disaster legal assistance hotline—800-504-7030—which connects callers with local legal aid lawyers who can advise them on issues including bankruptcy and debt collection, unemployment applications and appeals, mortgage or foreclosure issues, and landlord-tenant problems.

Many individual lawyers have stepped up to serve through the State Bar and its sections and committees. Claude Ducloux, Adam Schramek, Blair Dancy, Jett Hanna, Chris Ritter, Jefferson Fisher, and Scott Rothenberg quickly worked with Hedy Bower and the TexasBarCLE team to produce two free CLE webcasts in March that focused on how to practice law amid the unique challenges posed by the coronavirus. More than 10,000 attorneys have benefited from these webcasts, which remain available on the TexasBarCLE website. And as I write this, a third CLE is in the works featuring Larry Weinstein, CPA, and D. Todd Smith.

The Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program team—Chris Ritter, Shawna Storey-Lovin, Erica Grigg, and Penni Wood—have worked overtime to make sure lawyers have the emotional support and well-being resources they need. From hosting Remote Well-Being Wednesdays on Zoom to collecting remote living resources at texasbar.com/coronavirus, the TLAP team is providing a vital service to our profession.

And the State Bar's entire Austin-based staff and regional disciplinary counsel employees are working hard—all remotely, through telework—to help ensure the administration of the legal system continues and that Texas lawyers have the tools and guidance they need to carry on their practices. I thank them for their dedication.

To all State Bar members, I offer my gratitude as you continue to diligently serve your clients and defend the rule of law amid this crisis. Remember to be kind to each other and to take care of yourselves, and we will meet these new challenges together.

Sincerely,

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