



## ‘What, LIKE IT’S HARD?’

**I’M TIRED. PERHAPS MORE ACCURATELY, I’VE BEEN TIRED.** Back in 2017, I started riding a wave that began with bar service. The wave was small at first. I volunteered for a committee, joined the board of the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association, and served as president of the San Antonio LGBT Bar Association. The wave then grew when bar service brought me additional professional opportunities: double-certification by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, publications, presentations, awards, and other recognitions. The wave then peaked with my service and leadership in TYLA. In my head, people who knew me from before were saying, “You ... did all this?” And I was like, “What, like it’s hard?”

Then something really hard *did* happen. With the pandemic, the wave crashed, as did I. And I got tired, like *really* tired. Right when the pandemic started, I had my first grievance filed against me. Just after it was dismissed, I lost most of my personal files in the 2020 ransomware attack on the Texas appellate courts. Then, there was an unprecedented assault on our nation’s capital. Then running a wholly virtual statewide campaign toasted my brain. Despite my campaign slogan, “Practice Proudly,” I felt more disconnected from my job than ever.

But it got better. I called the Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program and spoke for an hour on the phone with Chris Ritter (no relation that we know of). He helped me feel better almost instantly by sharing a similar story about his career. I also leaned on the support of my husband, Dilshan, and my dear friend and former TYLA Chair Sara Giddings. I restarted therapy and got back on anti-depressants. Lifted up by my family and the support network I developed through bar service, I recalled back to better times, which has reenergized me in looking forward to this bar year.

As others have helped me, here’s how I plan to help others as TYLA president, with the support and dedication of TYLA Chair Judge Lauren Sepulveda and TYLA officers and directors. For attorney wellness, we’ll produce a *Taking on Trauma* video series in which lawyers share personal stories to help others through similar traumatic experiences in the practice of law. For attorney development, we’ll publish guides helping young lawyers with marketing, career development, and understanding the grievance system. We’ll continue our tradition of improving the legal profession through hosting nationally recognized law student competitions. And for our core mission of service, we’ll create numerous resources for the public and those involved in litigation, including *How Texas Courts Work*, a flagship project graciously supported by the Texas Bar Foundation, to help the public better understand the role of the judiciary.

Despite my exhaustion over the past two years, I’m here and ready to serve—powered by the past, prepared for the future.

### MICHAEL J. RITTER

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