



## Your Dues Aren't \$500. HERE'S WHY.

**IF STATE BAR OF TEXAS MEMBERSHIP DUES HAD KEPT UP WITH INFLATION**, most Texas lawyers would be paying more than \$500 a year today. Instead, thanks to year after year of responsible budget management by State Bar leaders, Texas lawyers continue to pay the same dues rate—\$235 or less depending on years of practice—that they have paid since 1991.<sup>1</sup> That's right, Texas lawyers' dues haven't increased since the first Bush administration.

This is an astonishing achievement, especially when you consider that the number of active Texas lawyers has doubled in that period, from 54,355 in 1991 to 111,412 today, while the number of State Bar staff has declined from a peak of 324 employees in 1999 to 265 today. And keep in mind, lawyer dues in Texas remain some of the lowest in the country, particularly for states like ours where the bar performs regulatory—and not simply trade association—functions.

This doesn't happen by accident. It takes the conscious effort of State Bar presidents, board members, executive directors, and staff to continually control costs, work smarter with technology, set aside funds for future budgetary needs, and provide quality services that bring in non-dues revenue. As a result, the State Bar is able to serve Texas lawyers with continuing education and resources; maintain lawyers' self-governance; and operate an independent, effective, and fair disciplinary system, all while keeping dues low.

Of course, holding the line on dues can't last forever. Due to the significant inflation experienced nationally last year, the State Bar's budgeted operating expenditures are expected to increase at a faster rate than our budgeted operating revenues. This means that a time will come when a dues increase will be necessary to sustain the bar's operations, but that time is not today.

The State Bar's proposed 2023-2024 budget contains no dues increase for the 32nd straight year. The budget would provide funding for important bar programs ranging from grievance system operations to law practice management and other member benefits, while accounting for expected cost increases due to inflation.

I invite you to review the proposed budget on pages 166-171 of this issue and online at [texasbar.com/finances](https://texasbar.com/finances). You can provide feedback at a public hearing at 9 a.m. April 4 at the Texas Law Center in Austin, or via email to [boardofdirectors@texasbar.com](mailto:boardofdirectors@texasbar.com). After considering all comments, the State Bar Board of Directors is expected to vote April 28 to present a proposed budget to the Texas Supreme Court for approval.

The traditional budget, as published in this journal, includes revenue and expenditure breakdowns by category type. Last year, we began supplementing this information by publishing an online version of the budget with more detailed breakdowns, along with brief narrative descriptions for each State Bar department. Also this year, we continue to provide a dues allocation breakdown that shows (1) what expenditures are funded by member dues; and (2) exactly how much of each lawyer's dues goes to these expenditures.

I am proud that the proposed budget reflects the State Bar's continued commitment to serving Texas lawyers, protecting the public, and improving the quality of legal services in our state. We look forward to your input.

Sincerely,

**TREY APFFEL**

Executive Director, State Bar of Texas  
Editor in Chief, *Texas Bar Journal*

### NOTES

1. Texas lawyers pay annual membership dues as follows: licensed 0-3 years, \$68; licensed 4-5 years, \$148; licensed more than five years, \$235; inactive attorneys, \$50. Attorneys age 70 and older are exempt from paying membership dues if they have filed a written notice requesting enrollment as an emeritus attorney.

### BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

**When:** 9 a.m. April 4

**Where:** Room 101, Texas Law Center, 1414 Colorado St., Austin, or watch the livestream at [youtube.com/statebaroftexas](https://youtube.com/statebaroftexas)

**Why:** The State Bar of Texas will accept public comments on its proposed 2023-2024 budget. Comments also can be emailed to [boardofdirectors@texasbar.com](mailto:boardofdirectors@texasbar.com).

**Online:** View the proposed budget, including departmental expenditure and revenue breakdowns and dues allocation information, at [texasbar.com/finances](https://texasbar.com/finances)