



## ‘Ugh, AS IF!’

“DEAR MR. RITTER: THE OFFICE OF CHIEF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL has received the above-referenced Grievance . . . and determined that the information provided alleges Professional Misconduct.” As I read the introductory sentences of the notice of my first (and thankfully only) grievance, I was totally buggin’!

It didn’t help that this notice came on April 8, 2020, at the pandemic’s onset, when the entire world was shutting down (except, apparently, the State Bar’s grievance system). On top of all the uncertainty, I was also afraid I could lose my law license. In my anxiety spiral, I spent several days in a black hole of researching and writing my responses. In retrospect, for my mental health at the time, I kind of wish I had the gall to simply respond, in the timeless words of Cher Horowitz in *Clueless*, “Ugh, as if!”

Yet a full-fledged response was required, which was a stressful experience. That said, this wouldn’t be a proper TYLA president’s column from yours truly without a positive perspective—and a shameless plug of TYLA resources.

Countless attorneys have had a meritless grievance filed against them. While unpleasant, the grievance system generally works everything out. The State Bar invests heavily into (and numerous attorneys spend countless volunteer hours on) operating fairly, thoroughly monitoring, and constantly improving the grievance system. Our system isn’t perfect, but all regulated professions have similar imperfect processes. For Texas lawyers, at least our system is self-regulated. All Texas-licensed attorneys can have a voice in shaping the grievance system, as well as the choice of whether to use that voice, get involved, and help make improvements.

No matter how cautious you are or how closely you follow the disciplinary rules, a meritless grievance always remains possible. Check out TYLA’s *Grievance & Malpractice 101* handbook and our recent CLE *10 Tips on How to Avoid Grievances & What to Do if You Get One* (available on YouTube). If you do your best to follow the rules and use resources available to you and you happen to get a grievance filed against you, the better your chances are of getting a letter that says something like: “Dear Mr. Ritter: The [grievance panel] has determined that the above-referenced Complaint should be dismissed,” and the sooner you can just get back to rollin’ with the homies.

### MICHAEL J. RITTER

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