

Kennon WOOTEN

HOMETOWN: AUSTIN

POSITION: PARTNER IN SCOTT DOUGLASS & MCCONNICO
IN AUSTIN

BOARD MEMBER: DISTRICT 9, PLACE 3; CHAIR, 2023-2024

INTERVIEW BY **WILL KORN**
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I DECIDED TO BECOME A LAWYER WHILE TAKING A BUSINESS LAW COURSE DURING MY FOURTH YEAR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES AT UT AUSTIN. I took the course as part of an extended business minor that was intended to supplement my B.A. in psychology and make me more employable during and after college. To my surprise, I loved learning about the law and realized that being a lawyer did not mean you had to fight all the time (contrary to what television shows of my youth suggested!). I got hooked on the law upon realizing it was a powerful mechanism for helping people solve problems.

THE DESIRE TO SERVE AND TO GIVE BACK DREW ME TO THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS DISTRICT DIRECTOR POSITION. In some ways, I worked toward the position for almost 20 years, starting with local bar service through the Austin Young Lawyers Association, or AYLA, and then the Austin Bar Association. Over the years, bar involvement has enabled me to volunteer, network, learn, teach, lead, and form lasting friendships. It has given me a sense of belonging that I might otherwise lack in the legal field. While bar service has required a lot of my time and energy, it truly has

been a gift that keeps on giving. Serving as a director was a way for me to give back to the bar that has given me so much over the years.

SOMETHING I HAVE ACCOMPLISHED WITH THE BAR THAT I AM MOST PROUD OF IS OVERSEEING THE CREATION OF THE AYLA DAY OF SERVICE PROJECT. This project is modeled after the national Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and has been ongoing for 13 years in Austin. Each year, it brings people of all ages together to engage in service activities in our community. Each year, I think about how it helps us to break down barriers and work toward King's vision of a beloved community. I'm grateful to the AYLA directors who have kept the tradition alive, and to all of the volunteers who have made the project a success over the years.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR DIRECTORS TO UNDERSTAND IS THE PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF SELF-GOVERNANCE IN OUR PROFESSION. State Bar of Texas members select the directors who carry out regulatory powers that have been delegated by the Supreme Court of Texas to the State Bar of Texas. I think directors should be vigilant about remembering how important it is to be engaged and informed when casting votes that impact our profession and the people who need and deserve meaningful access to justice.

MY FELLOW DIRECTORS AND I HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT WE CAN DISAGREE WITHOUT BEING DISAGREEABLE OR OTHERWISE DIVISIVE, that we value professionalism (as evidenced, in part, by revisions we recommended to the Texas Lawyer's Creed), and that we will act swiftly in response to legal developments in an effort to preserve our right of self-governance.

THE ISSUES WE FACE VARY, DEPENDING IN PART ON OUR PRACTICE AREAS AND OUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS. But one significant issue facing all of us is reduced faith in the rule of law. We have seen this play out in all levels of government and in relation to the highest court in our country. As board chair, I will honor the rule of law by applying Robert's Rules of Order consistently and fairly, by ensuring that we have respectful debate, and by honoring all types of diversity, including diversity of viewpoints. Regardless of how people feel about directors' decisions, I want them to have faith in our process.

MY ADVICE TO LAW STUDENTS AND NEWLY LICENSED LAWYERS IS TO BE MINDFUL ABOUT WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU, AND BE CAREFUL NOT TO GET SWEEPED UP IN SOCIETAL NOTIONS OF SUCCESS. If you value the work you do and feel like it brings out your strengths rather than your weaknesses, you are more likely to be successful as a lawyer and to achieve overall well-being in your life.

IN MY FREE TIME, I LOVE SPENDING TIME WITH MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY. I also enjoy watching documentaries, volunteering, eating at good restaurants, reading, and taking long walks (especially on beaches). **TBJ**