

State Bar of Texas

CORPORATE COUNSEL SECTION CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

MEMBERSHIP FOCUSES ON ENHANCING ROLES AND SKILLS OF THOSE WHO REPRESENT CORPORATIONS AND OTHER BUSINESS ENTITIES.

WRITTEN BY TONI NGUYEN

THE CORPORATE COUNSEL SECTION IS PROUD TO CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY STILL IN THE MAKING.

The section formed in the spring of 1974 during Lloyd Lochridge Jr.'s tenure as president of the State Bar of Texas and elected the following individuals as its first officers: Chair Eugene Coddou, Vice Chair Harrold Slaughter, and Secretary-Treasurer Charles Donovan. The section's mission was to enhance the role and skills of State Bar members engaged in the practice of law as corporate counsel. Today, the section has expanded its membership to include both in-house and outside counsel whose practice focuses on the representation of corporations and other business entities.

Shortly after formation, the section established the Corporate Counsel Institute, which grew to a two-day CLE program alternating locations between Dallas and Houston.

In 2002, the section collaborated with the State Bar of Texas Business Law Section to kick off what is now known as the Advanced In-House Counsel Course, the only annual program offered by the State Bar that is dedicated to issues facing in-house counsel. The two-day program is accompanied by the In-House 101 course tailored to attorneys who are beginning their in-house career. The program, co-chaired by Dena DeNooyer Stroh, Jennifer Evans Morris, and Natalie Arbaugh, attracts about 160 to 180 attendees—mostly corporate counsel attorneys—across Texas and surrounding states. The Corporate Counsel and Business Law sections also jointly host a one-day CLE program at the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting.

To enhance its commitment to provide more membership benefits, the section council further evolved its CLE and in September 2023 launched a new

free monthly CLE webinar called the Corporate Counsel Power Hour, after much planning and hard work of the then-Chair Toni Nguyen, Chair-elect Harry Beaudry, CLE Committee Co-Chairs Yolanda Brown and Emma Cano, and Membership Chair Larriet Thomas. Power Hour contributed to making Corporate Counsel the fastest growing State Bar section in the past year with membership growing 12% to more than 5,400 members in just nine months.

Additionally, the section has historically published the *Corporate Counsel Review*, with its first hard copy debuting in 1977 thanks to the efforts of then-Chair Jesse Luton. All section members receive a copy of this legal journal. The *Review* has retained its longevity and quality through the commitment of many editors throughout the years, including former SMU Dedman School of Law Associate Dean Edward Coultas, South Texas College of Law Houston Professor Val D. Ricks, and the late STCLH Professor R. Hanson Lawton. Since 2006, Ricks, together with his dedicated law student volunteers, have diligently shepherded the *Review* and spent countless hours reviewing and editing articles to produce the highest quality journal.

The section has a long-standing commitment to supporting pro bono legal services. Since 1997, the section has contributed more than \$969,000 to worthy organizations across Texas through a rigorous application process administered by its Pro Bono & Grants Committee, chaired for many years by Michael Marin. The section is expected to reach \$1 million in pro bono grants this year. All funds for these grants come from sources other than member dues, including from our generous Champions of Pro Bono sponsors, who donated \$80,000 in 2024 under the leadership of Sponsorship



FROM LEFT: Dena DeNooyer Stroh, Cynthia Mabry, Sylvia Cardona, Harry Beaudry, Emma Cano, Jennifer Evans Morris, Yolanda Brown, Toni Nguyen, Jason Smith, Larriet Thomas, Michael Marin, and Scott Young at the State Bar of Texas Corporate Counsel Section Council Fall Retreat on September 16, 2023, in San Antonio. PHOTO COURTESY OF TONI NGUYEN

Committee Co-Chairs Scott Young and Toni Nguyen. Nguyen and former Chair Jane McBride developed the Champions of Pro Bono program to advance the section's pro bono efforts.

Several ongoing programs provide value to section members. Lexology provides customizable access through the Corporate Counsel Newsstand to more than 450 articles across 50 practice areas. *Currents* is the section's online newsletter that publishes topics relevant to corporate counsel. The section maintains a robust website and archive of past content available only to its members. It also supports networking events around Texas for its members and partners with Texas law schools.

The section attributes its long-term success to its many past and present officers and council members, including recent Chairs Harry Beaudry, Toni Nguyen (who is the first Asian American and Pacific Islander chair of the section), Emma Cano, Jason Smith, Stephen Stein, Jeff Walker, Sylvia Cardona, Aaron Carlson, Brad Hancock, Michael Marin, Jane McBride, and Alma Reyes. The current officers and council members are identified on the section website at texascorporatocounsel.com/about-us/ leadership. **TBJ**



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serves as vice president, deputy general counsel, at PowerSchool Group LLC, which is a leading provider of cloud-based software for K-12 education and higher education in North America and across the globe. She leads a legal team supporting domestic and global commercial and technology transactions, acquisitions, and partnerships. Nguyen was the 2023-2024 chair and is the 2024-2025 immediate past chair of the State Bar of Texas Corporate Counsel Section.