

CELEBRATING CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

The Texas Lawyer's Creed begins middle age.

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM G. HAGANS AND ASHLEY HYMEL

On November 7, the Texas Lawyer's Creed will be old enough to run for president. While 35 years is a major milestone, it is also less than a quarter of the existence of the State Bar of Texas (established in 1882 as the Texas Bar Association).

The Texas Lawyer's Creed is intentionally aspirational. Take a quick glance at the memos, letters, and drafts surrounding the creed's creation (on display at the Texas Center for Legal Ethics thanks to a generous donation from Justice Eugene A. Cook) to get an insight into the time, the need, and the goals surrounding its formation.

Why a creed? As many have noted before, ethical rules can easily be created but professionalism must come from individuals, from a system of values, from a set of beliefs—a community's pact and sacred promise.

But a set of values are only as valuable as the people willing to give them value. In every culture, over time, values pass from elders to younger generations by example, through leadership, through apprenticeship. Indeed, this tradition of imparting wisdom has often been the only thing to keep a set of beliefs alive.

So it cannot be overstated how important mentorship is for professionalism and for our profession. One goal of the creed was to guide young lawyers who did not have a mentor to teach them the value of professionalism.

Bad actors sometimes make headlines, but nothing stays with us like sage advice from experienced attorneys. Or cautionary words from a mentor who cares. "We don't practice like that" can be far more impactful and memorable than any number of negative stories.

These experiences may not make headlines or be mentioned at the next judicial fundraiser, but they are important. They settle in deeper places in our memories. They impact our day-to-day practice.

At the end of the day, we are all in this profession—this bar—together. It is never too late to mentor someone or to look to others for mentorship. We must keep looking for ways to support each other, to set an example for other attorneys, the courts, our clients, and the public.

Civility and professionalism are traditions of vital importance. It should be no surprise that Texas was the first state to adopt a lawyer's creed because civility and professionalism are also Texas traditions. We celebrate the creed and the aspirations of the creed because it truly is who we are and who we aspire to be. We are "committed to this Creed for no other reason than it is right."

"Thirty-three of the fifty-five members of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 were lawyers; this is an excellent example of professionalism."¹ **TBJ**

NOTES

1. Justice Eugene A. Cook, *Professionalism: A Time for Action*, State Bar of Texas Advanced Personal Injury Law Course (July-August 1989).



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became a lawyer in 2006. He began working with his father, Fred Hagans (co-chair of the committee that wrote the Texas Lawyer's Creed), in 2011. Hagans is certified in personal injury trial law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. He is the chair-elect of the fellows of the Texas Bar Foundation and chair of the State Bar Professionalism Committee.



ASHLEY HYMEL

is a wife, mother, and Texas attorney who began her practice in 2013 in employment litigation before starting her own practice as a transactional attorney, specifically a business-formation attorney. Through this practice, she seeks to empower and embolden the entrepreneurial community of Texas. Hymel is also the immediate past chair of the Texas Young Lawyers Association, where she served on the board for six years.