State Bar of Texas

2024–2025 Committee Review Task Force Report

Overview

The State Bar Act (Section 81.122) requires the State Bar Executive Committee to review standing and special committees of the State Bar on a biennial basis. The Executive Committee is charged with determining whether there is a continued need for each committee and whether there is any unnecessary overlap of committee activities, as well as recommending any changes to State Bar policies governing committees.

Since 2004, standing and special committees have been reviewed, and various recommendations have been adopted by the State Bar Board of Directors. Recommendations have included making changes to Board Policy, changing committee names, redefining purpose clauses, and eliminating several committees.

A Committee Review Task Force was appointed at the beginning of the current Bar year. The task force members conducted an extensive review of all standing and special committees by attending meetings and gathering information from committee leadership, board liaisons, and staff liaisons.

Committee Review Process

The task force established a review process to evaluate the effectiveness of all State Bar standing and special committees. Committees were evaluated on their relevance in accordance with the State Bar Act, Strategic Plan, and Board Policy. The task force also evaluated whether a committee's purpose or activities overlap with the purpose and activities of other committees or sections of the State Bar. The review included the following:

- Collecting information about the purposes, goals, and activities of each standing committee;
- Comparing the goals and activities of each standing committee, including each committee's purpose clause with the reasons why each committee was originally created, and with the requirements of the State Bar Act, Strategic Plan, and Board Policy;
- Assessing each standing committee's activities, accomplishments, and financial information; and
- Reviewing State Bar policies and procedures governing standing and special committees.

Committee Review Task Force Recommendations

After extensive review, the Committee Review Task Force recommends that the majority of committees should continue in their current format with no significant changes with the exception of four committees. In addition, the task force recommends amending the purpose clause of one committee and recommends the creation of a new committee on Emerging Technology. The recommendations are explained in detail below.

Diversity in the Profession and Outreach and Engagement Committee

The task force recommends the merger of these two committees due to overlap. The task force recommends keeping the name and purpose clause of the Outreach and Engagement Committee for the newly merged committee and removing the committee composition language for the Outreach and Engagement Committee found in section 4.01.06 of the Board Policy Manual.

Jury Service Committee

The purpose of this committee is to "develop and implement programs to ensure broad citizen participation in and support of jury service." The task force has observed that this committee has projects that overlap with those of the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA). TYLA has similar efforts such as the "How Texas Courts Work" project and the "American Juror" project. TYLA's large audience could provide even greater public engagement. Therefore, the task force recommends eliminating the Jury Service committee and carrying on their efforts through TYLA.

Laws Relating to Immigration and Nationality Committee

The task force recommends that the purpose clause be amended as identified below.

> Proposed Purpose Clause Amendment
> To study and educate the legal profession on the current or proposed laws and policies pertaining to immigration and nationality, and the impact of such laws and policies upon the public. ~~and make recommendations for any improvements in such laws and policies to the State Bar Board of Directors as appropriate.~~

Public Affairs Committee

The purpose of the Public Affairs Committee is to "concern itself with expanding public understanding of the legal system as well as the role of lawyers in that system, and to foster relations with the news media to further these goals." This committee has an annual CLE program which the task force believes could be absorbed into other regular programming the State Bar provides. Therefore, the Task Force recommends eliminating this committee.

(NEW) Emerging Technology Committee

In 2023, the Taskforce for Responsible AI in the Law (TRAIL) was formed to address the growing impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the legal profession. The taskforce worked to identify ways that the emergence of new AI technology might affect the practice of law and how lawyers, judges, and the State Bar should respond. The work of TRAIL focused on crafting guidelines, navigating challenges, and embracing the potential of AI within the legal profession. To further study these issues, the Committee Review Task Force recommends the creation of a new standing committee on emerging technology. A proposed purpose clause for the committee is as follows:

> Proposed Purpose Clause for the Emerging Technology Committee
> To identify and research emerging technologies and their impact on the practice of law and on the justice system. To make recommendations to the State Bar Board of Directors on ways the Bar might leverage the opportunities presented by emerging technologies, and to educate attorneys and the public about any risks those technologies may present and how to mitigate them.

Conclusion

The State Bar currently has a total of 28 standing committees and one special committee. Overall, the committee structure of the Bar is sound and is meeting the goals established by the State Bar Act, Strategic Plan, and Board Policy. The Committee Review Task Force concludes that there is a continuing need for the majority of the committees with the exception of those which are noted in this report. In

summary, the task force makes the following recommendations to the State Bar Board of Directors:

1. Eliminate the Jury Service Committee.
2. Eliminate the Public Affairs Committee.
3. Merge the Diversity in the Profession Committee and the Outreach and Engagement Committee, keeping the name and purpose clause of the Outreach and Engagement Committee.
4. Amend the purpose clause for the Laws Relating to Immigration and Nationality Committee.
5. Create a new committee on Emerging Technology.

These conclusions and recommendations will be presented to the Board of Directors of the State Bar of Texas at the Board meeting on April 25, 2025. It is recommended that these changes, if adopted by the Board, become effective on June 1, 2025, in conjunction with the start of the State Bar fiscal year for 2025-2026.

This report is submitted on behalf of the Committee Review Task Force, whose members include Santos Vargas (Chair), Matthew J. Hill, Lowell A. Keig, Laura Pratt, and Andrew "Drew" Spaniol.

Respectfully Submitted,

Santos Vargas, Chair

Summary of Committee Recommendations

Standing Committee	Recommendation	Notes
Administration of Rules of Evidence	Continue with no changes	N/A
Advertising Review	Continue with no changes	N/A
Continuing Legal Education	Continue with no changes	N/A
Court Rules	Continue with no changes	N/A
Disability Rights and Issues	Continue with no changes	N/A
Diversity in the Profession	Merge with another committee	Due to overlap, this committee should merge with the Outreach and Engagement Committee. Eliminate this committee's name in Board Policy section 4.01.05.
Jury Service	Eliminate committee	Activities/programs could continue through TYLA. Eliminate committee name in section 4.01.05 of the Board Policy Manual.
Law Focused Education	Continue with no changes	N/A
Law Practice Management	Continue with no changes	N/A
Laws Relating to Immigration and Nationality	Continue with modification to purpose clause	Update purpose clause for more accurate description.
Lawyers' Assistance Program	Continue with no changes	N/A
Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters	Continue with no changes	N/A
Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters	Continue with no changes	N/A
Local Bar Services	Continue with no changes	N/A
Minimum Continuing Legal Education	Continue with no changes	N/A
Outreach and Engagement	Merge with another committee	Due to overlap, merge this committee with the Diversity in the Profession. Remove section 4.01.06 of the Board Policy Manual.
Pattern Jury Charges – Business, Consumer, Insurance & Employment	Continue with no changes	N/A
Pattern Jury Charges – Criminal	Continue with no changes	N/A
Pattern Jury Charges – Family and Probate	Continue with no changes	N/A
Pattern Jury Charges – General Negligence, Intentional Personal Torts & Workers Compensation	Continue with no changes	N/A
Pattern Jury Charges – Malpractice, Premises & Products	Continue with no changes	N/A

Pattern Jury Charges – Oil and Gas	Continue with no changes	N/A
Pattern Jury Charges – Oversight	Continue with no changes	N/A
Professionalism and Civility	Continue with no changes	The committee should work with the Texas Center for Legal Ethics to ensure there is no overlap or duplicative efforts.
Public Affairs	Eliminate committee	Absorb the committee's annual CLE into other regular programming the State Bar provides. Eliminate committee name in section 4.01.05 of the Board Policy Manual.
Real Estate Forms	Continue with no changes	N/A
Texas Bar Journal Board of Editors	Continue with no changes	N/A
Women in the Profession	Continue with no changes	Review in two years to see if there is significant overlap with the Women and the Law Section.
Special Committee	**Recommendation**	**Notes**
Annual Meeting	Continue with no changes	n/a
Proposed New Committee	**Recommendation**	**Notes**
Emerging Technology	Create new committee on Emerging Technology and appoint members to begin in conjunction with Bar year 2025-2026.	n/a