



Law Practice Management CLE

The State Bar of Texas Law Practice Management Committee will broadcast a daylong CLE presentation on November 17 covering issues such as ethically selling legal services, social media, podcasting and vlogging, ethical billing practices, dealing with online reviews, and managing the virtual office. The course is accredited for 5 hours of CLE credit, including 2.75 ethics hours. Register at <http://www.texasbarcle.com/CLE/AABuy1.asp?sProductType=EV&IID=18910>.

A Website to Help You **'PRACTICE WELL'**

ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2020, THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS LAUNCHED ITS NEWEST MEMBER SERVICE—a new law practice management website designed to help Texas lawyers do well and be well.

The website, texasbarpractice.com, offers lawyers a single place to:

- explore free practice management content produced by experienced attorneys;
- shop for practice manuals, jury charges, deskbooks, and reference guides; and
- subscribe to online practice manuals for downloadable forms and practice notes.

The Texas Bar Practice website combines resources and functions that previously existed on the Texas Bar Books and State Bar websites while adding new resources and a focus on lawyer well-being.

“We wanted to have a site where lawyers could go to get resources that would help them create a sustainable, healthy practice,” said Sharon Sandle, who directs the State Bar of Texas Law Practice Resources Division. “When you get to the website one of the things that comes up is the slogan at the top of the page, ‘Practice Well.’ The idea being that you have substantive resources that help you do a good job as an attorney but also have a practice that is healthy and sustainable and profitable for you.”

For years, State Bar staff have tracked members’ calls on common practice management issues and used that data to create the new website. Users will find free resources on managing client files, cybersecurity, succession planning, and many other issues. By the same token, member feedback also influenced the design of the Texas Bar Books portion of the new website. In response to popular demand, customers will now be able to browse products, access practice manual subscriptions, pay invoices, and manage their individual or law firm accounts through a single site.

The design of Texas Bar Practice is meant to evoke a peaceful work environment, like your ideal office where you can settle down and get some work done. The site is clean and uncluttered, so you can find what you need quickly.

Funding for the website came from the State Bar’s 2020-2021 budget, which was created under the leadership of President Larry McDougal and the board’s budget committee. As detailed in my March 2020 column, the budget adds resources to programs that provide tangible services to Texas lawyers—including member benefits, law practice management, and the Texas Lawyers’ Assistance Program—while maintaining the long-term goal of keeping three months of operating expenditures in reserves.

It’s all part of our mission to support the administration of the legal system and enable Texas lawyers to better serve their clients. I hope you’ll visit texasbarpractice.com and let us know what you think.

Sincerely,

TREY APFFEL

Executive Director, State Bar of Texas
Editor in Chief, *Texas Bar Journal*



Projects! Projects! Projects! TYLA CONTINUES TO LEAD ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

EACH YEAR, THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS LOCAL BAR LEADERS CONFERENCE features a breakout session titled “Projects! Projects! Projects!” where speakers from the Texas Young Lawyers Association and local young lawyer affiliates showcase their successful and innovative programs that local bar associations can duplicate. That session title—with three exclamation points—tells you a lot about TYLA. It speaks to both the number of projects our young lawyer leaders create each year and the energy they bring to their work.

Take, for example, TYLA’s efforts on diversity. Working in partnership with the State Bar, the TYLA Board of Directors has created and rolled out a number of projects in recent years aimed at increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. These projects range from blogs and podcasts that amplify diverse voices to pipeline projects designed to help increase the number of minority lawyers in Texas to more closely reflect the state’s diverse population.

This year, TYLA President Britney Harrison is stressing the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in every project the board is developing. Part of her vision and directive for the projects is to ensure participation by diverse speakers and writers from all parts of Texas. Some specific projects include:

- **Racial Justice Committee:** This committee is charged with developing meaningful content and materials for the *Racial Justice Hub*, a website that will include information about racial justice, anti-racism, and allyship for lawyers and members of the public.
- **Iconic Women in Legal History:** Through a generous grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, TYLA is developing the *Iconic Women in Legal History* project, which aims to highlight and explore the roles of women who helped shape our culture and advance civil and legal rights. The project will highlight Black women and other minorities who are often left out of history books.
- **Leadership Toolkit for Smaller/Rural Affiliates:** A portion of this toolkit is devoted to diversity and inclusion in leadership.

I applaud President Harrison and the TYLA board for their leadership on these issues. The State Bar Board of Directors is also pursuing potential new diversity initiatives through the newly created Task Force on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Justice in Leadership Workgroup and through other efforts approved by the board at special meetings in July and September.¹

Why is this the State Bar’s role? Diversity programs are necessary to address the lingering effects of discrimination in the legal profession and legal education. These efforts help lawyers and courts bring a range of viewpoints to bear on legal problems facing our state and help the State Bar achieve its mission of promoting diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law and improving the quality of legal services in Texas.

As TYLA Immediate Past President Victor A. Flores likes to say, we are better together. So let’s keep working together to achieve a better, stronger, and more unified Texas Bar for all members.

Sincerely,

TREY APFFEL

Executive Director, State Bar of Texas
Editor in Chief, *Texas Bar Journal*

NOTE

1. *State Bar Board Approves Diversity Panel Rosters, Study of Model Discrimination Rule*, 83 Tex. B.J. 654; *State Bar Board Takes Action on Diversity and Inclusion Issues at Special Meeting*, 83 Tex. B.J. 534.

TYLA Diversity Projects

TYLA created the following diversity projects as resources for lawyers and law students—or anyone curious about the law or a legal career. You can find most of these projects and many more resources at tyla.org.

Websites

- *I Was The First. You Can Be A Lawyer Too!*
- *Lawyers Who Lunch*

Podcasts

- *SHERO*
- *Young Gunners*

Community/Networking Events

- *Speed Mentoring for Women Law Students*
- *Strength in Unity*
- *TYLA Diversity Dinner*

Other Resources

- *Pregnancy and the Workplace: Know Your Rights*
- *Pregnancy and the Workplace: Know Your Obligations*
- *Retention Guide*
- *Affiliate Diversity Toolkit*



TOJI Lawyers Flourish **DURING PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY**

WHILE 2020 HAS SEEN RECORD UNEMPLOYMENT NUMBERS BROUGHT ON BY A PANDEMIC AND A VOLATILE ECONOMY, lawyers in the Texas Opportunity & Justice Incubator have found themselves well prepared to weather the uncertainty and to continue delivering legal services to Texas communities.

Over the past decade, the popularity of legal incubator programs focused on supporting entrepreneurial lawyers while improving access to affordable legal services has grown exponentially. The State Bar of Texas joined this movement in April 2017 by launching the Texas Opportunity & Justice Incubator under the leadership of then-President Frank Stevenson.

In less than three years, the TOJI program helped start and build 72 solo, small, and nonprofit law firms spanning 35 areas of law. Better yet, these firms are providing quality service to low- and modest-income clients—offering much-needed access to justice to our fellow Texans.

Some people can't afford the market rate for lawyers in their communities, and there is tremendous market opportunity for lawyers willing to offer accessible legal services.

Don't take my word for it. We have real-world examples of TOJI lawyers and alumni who are finding success through the innovative delivery of legal services:

- Calli Baldwin, of Richmond, was motivated to experiment with different fee structures, including flat fees, to make quality legal representation more affordable for her family law clients.
- San Antonio immigration lawyer Mario Humberto Cantú reimagined his practice to focus on empowering clients. By offering transparent pricing and using technology to improve how he engages clients, Cantú helps them overcome systemic and financial barriers to justice.
- Austin's Carl Guthrie and Kannon Moore co-founded the Texas Poverty Law Project and argued the nation's first virtual jury trial in Travis County Justice of the Peace Precinct Five. You can read more about their endeavors in "Creating Alternatives," an article in the November 2020 *Texas Bar Journal*.
- Four TOJI alums—Nicole Burns, of Georgetown; Sonya Butts, of Houston; Deborah Hubbs, of The Woodlands; and Kannon Moore, of Austin—were selected to join the inaugural class of the Advocate Attorneys Consumer Protection Fellowship where they provide access to justice for consumers in claims against debt collectors, credit reporting agencies, and other financial predators.
- Caroline Nelson, of Austin, built concrete, creative legal service delivery options that range from traditional to limited-scope representation, client coaching to intermediation, as well as stand-alone courses that provide resources to families that may not be capable of hiring a lawyer to help them navigate a disability-related school law issue.
- Nii Amaa Ollennu, of McKinney, developed and began implementing a video content plan on YouTube tailored to his ideal clients, individuals in the justice gap, and those who do not want to read long blog posts.
- Alex Shahrestani, of Austin, collaborated with his wife to offer startups and nonprofits a variety of legal services using future-focused tech and billing practices, including process automation and subscription fees.

As evidenced by these outstanding examples, TOJI helps lawyers gain the skills and knowledge to grow sustainable businesses serving underserved communities in Texas.

No longer an exclusively Austin-based program, TOJI moved to a virtual platform in early 2020. Now, attorneys from across the entire state of Texas, including its more rural and distant areas, can join this supportive, vibrant community of like-minded entrepreneurs and learn to run a law office with a focus on innovation and service.

If you want to collaborate with pioneering Texas lawyers who are making a difference in their communities, then we are looking for you! TOJI will begin accepting applications for its sixth cohort on December 7. Learn more and apply by visiting txoji.com and following @txoji_a2j on social media.

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TREY APFFEL

Executive Director, State Bar of Texas
Editor in Chief, *Texas Bar Journal*