

Sara E. Dysart
Attorney at Law
206 Primera Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78212

August 4, 2020

Mr. Randy Sorrels
Mr. Jerry Alexander
Nominations & Elections Committee
State Bar of Texas

RE: Statement of Interest to Serve as President of the State Bar of Texas

Dear Mr. Sorrels and Mr. Alexander:

Most Important Issues Facing the State Bar of Texas--I watched the Special Meeting of the Board of Directors with a heavy heart; but also, with great pride and respect for our SBOT members and leaders. As a former Director, I had great empathy for the Directors who were called into executive session to determine how to respond to the passionate voices and extensive written statements of our members addressing a serious issue challenging the integrity of State Bar of Texas leadership.

Attorneys are the embodiment of the third branch of government--the judiciary. Attorneys should not only defend "justice for all" and "equal treatment under the law", we must embody and stand for these rights. SBOT leaders are now charged with implementing a plan to address the divide and marginalization experienced by SBOT members based upon race, gender, sexual preference, and members working a program of recovery from addiction. I want to be part of the solution and will advocate for meaningful change with lightning speed. I strongly support, and would like to be a part of, President-Elect Sylvia Borunda Firth's committee on diversity, equality and inclusion and recommend that her committee have the resources to cause immediate results.

The consequences of COVID is another issue facing the State Bar. Attorneys are experiencing social isolation and economic challenges. Holding mediations, hearings, and bar sponsored events on zoom may be a substitute but not an answer. Attorneys are most effective when they can meet with their clients and opposing counsel, advocate before judges, and interact with their colleagues. The SBOT must be a leader in providing safe practices when CLE programs and bar-related activities move from zoom to on-site locations. In the meantime, the SBOT must continue to provide resources to attorneys during these challenging times.

Why I Want to Serve as State Bar President—My life experiences and legal career qualify me to relate to all 105,000 plus licensed Texas attorneys, whether they are practicing at major Texas law firms or as solo practitioners, civil law attorneys or criminal law attorneys, and those who work for legal aid providers or major corporations. I describe my law practice as a "people's practice" and myself as a "people's lawyer". After working with a law firm that represented savings and loan associations in the 1980's, I started my own law practice in 1990.

While I learned how to practice commercial real estate law at the law firm, I learned survival as a sole practitioner. My message to Texas attorneys is that there is no substitute for hard work and providing the highest quality legal services at a fair rate. I am an advocate for State Bar CLE courses. My ability to provide the “highest quality legal services” has been enhanced by attending State Bar CLE courses and being a presenter and contributor. The added bonus I have experienced from presenting at State Bar CLE programs is respect from colleagues throughout Texas; not to mention a number of client referrals.

Vital interests that I would address as State Bar President include:

1. I strongly support on-going efforts on diversity, equality, and inclusion. All Texas attorneys should experience “getting more out of service than you give”. Opportunities for service on the SBOT board of directors, committees, CLE courses, and sections, and the many other ways to be involved, especially at the local bar level, must be expanded. Bar leaders can seek out others in ways as simple as “bring a colleague to a bar meeting; recruit a colleague to join a committee.” SBOT resources could be used to “scale” programs like SBOT Leadership and REPTL Leadership Academy for other State Bar sections and local bar associations. Less experienced attorneys could be invited to join committees like the Real Estate Forms Committee as “mentee members” to learn from and assist the more senior members of the committees.
2. I believe that one of the best ways for attorneys to own “justice for all” and “equal treatment under the law” is to deliver “access to justice”. How can we understand what struggles others who are less fortunate are experiencing, if we are not willing to meaningfully engage? We are licensed and qualified to provide legal services to those who cannot afford to pay for legal services. My focus will be to create innovated and “user-friendly” ways for attorneys to provide pro bono services. Our recent “remote wills clinic for first responders” offered by the San Antonio Legal Services Association is an excellent example of how to enhance attorney participation. Over a weekend, 37 volunteer attorneys went to over 200, and then almost 400 attorney volunteers, because the “ask” was very “user-friendly”.
3. The consequences of COVID, including social isolation and economic challenges, will result in more attorneys struggling with anxiety, depression, and addictions. TLAP’s message of “confidential help for attorneys experiencing addictive behavior” should be loud and often. Every year the SBOT should commit more resources to TLAP. I am a passionate advocate for TLAP and a proud member of Texas Lawyers’ Concerned for Lawyers for nearly two decades. I have given TLAP presentations at State Bar CLE programs and served as a monitoring attorney for the Texas Board of Law Examiners. I have publicly put a “face on recovery” as a successful attorney who recognized a life-threatening issue and sought help. My message will be “it is not enough to call for a ride when under the influence, please call for help—TLAP (1-800-343-8527)”.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,


SARA E. DYSART

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Attorney at Law

206 Primera Drive

San Antonio, Texas 78212

**Board Certified Commercial Real Estate Law
Texas Board of Legal Specialization**

EDUCATION

St. Mary's University School of Law, J.D., *with distinction*, May 1981

University of Texas at San Antonio, Master of Arts, May 1977

St. Mary's University, Bachelor of Arts, *magna cum laude*, May 1974

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND AWARDS

Texas Bar Foundation 2020 Terry Lee Grantham Memorial Award

St. Mary's University 2019 Distinguished Graduate

San Antonio Business Journal 2018 Outstanding Lawyer

Association of Corporate Counsel South Texas Chapter

2017 C. Lee Cusenbary Ethical Life Award

State Bar of Texas Presidents' Award 2016

State Bar of Texas Presidential Citation 2015

TexasBarCLE's "Standing Ovation Award" 2015

Bexar County Women's Bar Foundation Belva Lockwood Outstanding Attorney Award 2015

San Antonio Bar Foundation Peacemaker Award 2014

State Bar of Texas Advanced Real Estate Weatherbie Workhorse Award 2013

State Bar of Texas Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers Ralph Mock Memorial Award 2012

San Antonio Bar Association President's Award 2007, 2012 & 2015

Co-Chair of the SBOT Annual Meeting 2015

State Bar of Texas Director 2012 – 2015

Texas Bar College Board of Directors (2019-2022)

American College of Real Estate Lawyers 2011 – present

Guardian Member of the Texas Access to Justice Society, Texas Access to Justice Commission

Texas Board of Legal Specialization Real Estate Law Advisory Commission 2015 – 2021

Texas Board of Legal Specialization Real Estate Law Exam Commission 2015 - 2021

State Bar of Texas Real Estate, Probate & Trust Law Section Council Member 2011 - 2015

Texas Bar Foundation Trustee (2015-2018); Sustaining Life Fellow (Fellow since 1991)

Co-Chair of District 10 Fellows Nominating Committee 2013 - 2014

State Bar of Texas - Real Estate Forms Committee 2004 – present/ (Chair 2018-2020)

State Bar of Texas Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers Committee; Chair 2009 – 2010

San Antonio Bar Foundation - Chair 1998 – 1999

State Bar of Texas District 10 PEP Grievance Committee Chair 1998-1999

San Antonio Bar Association - Treasurer 1991 - 1992; 1996 -1997; Director 2010 -2012

San Antonio Bar Association Real Estate Section Chair 2013 – present

San Antonio Real Estate Discussion Group Chair 2005 - present

Bexar County Women's Bar Association - Treasurer 1989

St. Mary's University School of Law Board of Visitors 2016- 2021 (Chair 2018-2021)

St. Mary's Law Alumni Association - President 1991 - 1992

St. Mary's University Board of Trustees - Trustee - 1992 – 1993

Texas Monthly Super Lawyer for numerous years
Briefing Attorney for the 4th Court of Appeals 1981 - 1982

COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

St. Mary's University Board of Trustees
Broadway Bank Board of Directors
San Antonio Council on Alcohol and Drug Awareness Advisory Board (Chair)
Real Estate Founders' Council, UTSA
San Antonio River Foundation Board of Directors
Impact San Antonio
United Way Women's Leadership Council

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS INCLUDE

Member of Planning Committees for many Texas BarCLE real estate law courses
Course Director 41st Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas, 2019
Course Director 27th Annual Advance Real Estate Drafting, State Bar of Texas 2016
Course Director, 4th Annual Real Estate Strategies Course, State Bar of Texas, 2010
Course Co-Director, 30th Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas, 2008

A Walk Down Bad Deed Lane, 42nd Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2020.

Board Certified in Real Estate Law—Me? Real Estate Law 101, State Bar of Texas, July 2020.

When All Else Fails Read the Manual--the Real Estate Forms Manual, 20th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2019

Revisions to Real Estate Documents Based Upon 2017 Legislative Changes, 29th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2018

Tenant Estoppel Certificate and SNDA from a Tenant's Perspective, 28th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2017

Reservation or Exception, What Is It Going To Be?, Texas Land Title Institute, December 2016

The Visual Rights Act of 1990 Collides with Real Estate Ownership, American College of Real Estate Attorneys, March 2016

Seller Should Provide Accurate Statutory Notices Incident to the Sale of Real Property, 37nd Annual Advanced Real Estate Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2015

Loan Documents as an Operations Manual, 48th Annual William C. Gibson, Jr., Mortgage Lending Institution, University of Texas School of Law, September 2014

Drafting Seller Financing Documents, 25th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2014

Negotiating Loan Documents- Post 2008, 24th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2013

Texas Probate Code Redefines Secured Creditor's Rights and Remedies (Clarified by 2011 Amendments), 32nd Annual Advanced Real Estate Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2012

Buyer at Foreclosure (New Meaning to "Buyer Beware"), 44th Annual William C. Gibson, Jr., Mortgage Lending Institution, University of Texas School of Law, September 2010

Maturity Dates, Defaults, and Refinancing Options, 32nd Annual Advanced Real Estate Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2010

Mandatory Disclosure Notices Incident to the Sale of Real Property, 21st Annual Advanced Drafting Course, March State Bar of Texas, March 2010

Deed in Lieu of Foreclosure and Other Workout Options, 43rd Annual William C. Gibson, Jr., Mortgage Lending Institution, University of Texas School of Law, September 2009

Workouts Including Forebearance Agreements, Reinstatement Agreements, Short Sales, and Deeds in Lieu of Foreclosure, 31st Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2009

Workouts Including Forebearance Agreements, Reinstatement Agreements, Short Sales, and Deeds in Lieu, 31st Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas July 2009

Planning for Defaults, Workouts, and Foreclosures, 20th Annual Advanced Real Estate Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2009

Accepting and Delivering a Deed in Lieu of Foreclosure, 42nd Annual William C. Gibson, Jr., Mortgage Lending Institute, University of Texas School of Law, September 2008

The Impact of the Texas Supreme Court's Adoption of Section 87(1)(A) of the Restatement (Second) of Contracts, 19th Annual Advanced Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2008

Attorney Acting as a Substitute Trustee in a Non-Judicial Foreclosure Sale, 18th Annual Advanced Real Estate Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, March 2007

Texas Probate Code Redefines Secured Creditor's Rights and Remedies, 41st Annual William C. Gibson, Jr., Mortgage Lending Institute, University of Texas School of Law, September 2006.

Impact of Loan Documents on the Borrower, 26th Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, State Bar of Texas, July 2004

A POTPOURRI OF ISSUES: Accelerated Rent, Preserving a Guarantor's Liability and Non-Recourse Provisions for Landlord Tenant, Real Estate Law: Leases In-Depth, SMU School of Law, March 1997

Atom Bomb Review of a Deed of Trust in Commercial Lending (from the Borrower's Perspective), Real Estate Law: Mortgages in Depth, SMU School of Law, January 1993

Earnest Money Contracts for the Purchaser of Raw Land (Reviewed from a Buyer's Perspective), Workouts and Closings, University of Houston CLE Course, March 1991 and March 1992

Partial Release Clauses and Subordination Agreements: The Consequences of Drafting Unclear Provisions, 3rd Annual Advanced Real Estate Drafting Course, State Bar of Texas, January 1991

The Effect of Foreclosure on Other Liens and Encumbrances, St. Mary's Eleventh Annual Procedural Law Institute, Foreclosure Litigation, November 1989

The Continued Existence of Deeds in Lieu of Foreclosure, State Bar of Texas, 11th Annual Advanced Real Estate Law Course, May 1989

The Power of Sale – The Heart and Soul of a Deed of Trust, Real Estate Law: Mortgages in Depth Program, SMU School of Law, January 1989

Basics of Negotiating Deeds of Trust and Other Real Estate Security Documents, State Bar of Texas, 9th Annual Real Estate Law Course, May 1987

Real Estate Documents, Symposium Editor, Real Estate Finance --An Emphasis on Texas Law, St. Mary's Law Journal, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1981)

Comment, USLTA: Article 5 A Construction Liens Analyzed in Light of Current Texas Law on Mechanic's and Materialmen's Liens, 12 St. Mary's L.J. 113 (1980)

Laura Gibson

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August 4, 2020

Co-Chairs Randy Sorrels and Jerry Alexander
Members, SBOT Nominations & Elections Subcommittee

Re: Statement of Interest to serve as President of the State Bar of Texas and Resume

Dear Co-Chairs Sorrels and Alexander and Subcommittee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you why I am interested in serving as President Elect of the State Bar and share my thoughts regarding important issues that are currently facing our Bar.

I have had the great fortune to practice law successfully in Houston for almost 36 years. Law wasn't my original career path. Although my father was a well-regarded lawyer, I grew up at a time when the only woman in the courtroom was the court reporter. When I began my education at Texas A&M, a law degree did not seem plausible for me and so I pursued other studies.

Still, I had always loved hearing my father tell me about the clients he represented and the difference he made in their lives. Since he had never spoken to me about a career in law, I asked him what he thought about me going to law school. It was then that he told me that my mother made him promise never to encourage me to become a lawyer because she feared that being a lawyer was too stressful. My father told me I would be an excellent lawyer and offered to give me a job at his law firm so I could afford to pay for law school. Immediately after graduating, I moved back to Houston and began working as a runner at his law firm. On my first day, he asked me meet with a new client to gather facts about a car accident. From that day on, my work at his firm gave me a very realistic exposure to the practice of law. My father was triple board certified, including being certified in family law. After foregoing the clerkship interviewing process in my first and second year summers, I soon realized that I was not cut out to be a family law attorney. Having gone to school both summers, this discovery occurred just before my December graduation date.

As an early graduating 3L from the University of Houston Law Center, I interviewed for a commercial litigation position. I joined the law firm now known as Locke Lord on January 2, 1985, and I made partner in 1992. Although I served on the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee during that time, the Bar was not a focus of mine or the firm. I believe that was because working at what was then considered a big firm provided so many of the services the Bar provides to solo and small firm lawyers. The firm also didn't enthusiastically support service at the State Bar level.

A year after having made partner, I had an opportunity to form my own firm with three other firm colleagues. I went from a 90 person law firm to one with just 4 attorneys. This was shortly after lawyers started having computers and before the advent of email. While I loved practicing in a smaller environment, it presented new challenges. Before, I was viewed as one of the litigators of choice by the transactional lawyers which meant that when their clients were faced with litigation, I was asked to handle the matter. Once I moved to my own firm, those referrals stopped immediately.

Working as a small firm lawyer, I was now lonely for interaction with other lawyers and desperately in need of developing referral sources. That led me to become involved in the HBA. I soon began signing up to

participate in HBA committees. My first significant involvement was with the Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee. Our early efforts focused on providing programming to our members to assist minority lawyers in their career endeavors.

In addition to joining committees, I became involved in the Litigation and Labor & Employment Sections. I also came to realize the importance of becoming board certified in order to become known as an expert in a particular specialization. I became board certified in Labor & Employment law in 2001.

Thirty-three years after forming my own firm, my fellow partners were on the verge of retirement and I was not. Through connections with a former opposing counsel and bar colleague, I was recruited to join Dentons, a large law firm with a very small Houston office. Ironically, my job presents many of the same challenges I experienced as a small firm lawyer but gives my peers the impression that I have all the benefits associated with working for a big firm.

My Bar experience has led me to the realization that people working together for a common interest is good not only for our constituents but also for us as servant leaders. In reflection, the opportunities of which I am most grateful include leading the HBA's creation of a Houston Grand Opera performance which told the story about the first President of the HBA who put his career and money at risk representing a free African American woman who was wrongfully enslaved in 1847. After a trial to an all-white jury, he secured her freedom. Money from the performances funded pro bono services and taught students of their importance.

During my term as President of the Association of Women Attorneys in 2011, we created the Premier Women in Law Luncheon honoring women lawyers and raising scholarship funds. While this year's luncheon has been postponed due to the pandemic, scholarship proceeds from past luncheons exceed \$200,000.

The challenges our Bar must face include maintaining our status as an integrated Bar, preserving the rule of law and making access to liberty and justice an inalienable right for all of our citizens. At the same time, we need to continue our focus on providing excellent member services including passing legislation which would provide our members with an all-state courthouse access badge, and better communicating our extensive array of services available to our members.

In our current climate, we must redouble the work of the Office of Minority Affairs which supports the Bar's commitment to creating a fair and equal legal profession for *all* attorneys including racial and ethnic minority, women and LGBT attorneys.

With the power of an integrated Bar, 105,000 members and growing, we are up for the challenge. Indeed, every opportunity I have had to serve the Bar, whether local or statewide, has made me grateful that I am a lawyer whose profession enables me to effectuate meaningful change.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to have the opportunity to interview with the Committee in order to share my ideas for the Bar and to personally thank you for your service to our Bar.

Sincerely,


Laura Gibson

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WORK EXPERIENCE

Partner, Dentons US LLP (2016-Present)
Head of the Texas Employment and Labor Group
Member of Associate Development Committee (2018-Present)
Member of Leadership Academy (2018-Present)
Ogden, Gibson, Broocks, Longoria & Hall, Founding Partner (1993-2016)
Locke Lord, Associate and Partner (1985-93)

EDUCATION

B.S., Texas A & M University (1982)
J.D., University of Houston Law Center (1984)

BAR SERVICE

State Bar of Texas

1. **CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2018-19)**
Executive Committee (2018-20)
2. **DIRECTOR DISTRICT 4, PLACE 1 (2016-20)**
Co-Chair State Bar of Texas Co-Chair Succession Planning Task Force (2019-20)
Chair of Special Committee to Nominate ABA Delegates (2019-2020)
Annual Meeting Committee (2017-18)
Co-Chair Nominations & Elections Committee (2019-20)
Texas Board of Legal Specialization Appeals/Grants Committee (2016-17)
Client Security Fund (2016-17)
3. **DIRECTOR DISTRICT 4, PLACE 5 (2012-15)**
Chair Administration Committee(2014-15)
Board Liaison Texas Bar Foundation, (2014-15)
Board of Editors, Texas Bar Journal, (2012-15)
4. **OTHER BAR ACTIVITIES**
Texas Minority Counsel Program – Steering Committee (2007-12, Co-Chair (2009 and 2010); Chair of Counsel Award Recognition Subcommittee (2011)
Founder of Liberty & Justice for All Task Force (May 2020), committed to the non-partisan registration of voters in advance of the November 2020 elections and ultimately the education about and reformation of voting suppression laws.

Texas and Houston Bar Foundations Sustaining Life Fellow
Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee
State Bar of Texas Advanced Trial Strategies, Speaker(2017)
Texas Bar Foundation District 4, Nominating Committee (2005-15)

Local Bar Associations

1. **HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION**
 - President (2015-16)
 - Treasurer and Co-Chair of Harvest Celebration (2013-14) (responsible for raising \$616,000)
 - Secretary (2012-13); First Vice President (2011-12); Second Vice President (2010-11)
Director, Board of Directors, (2006-10)
Labor and Employment Section (Chair 2006-07)
 - Litigation Section (Council Member 2006-09)
 - Administration of Justice Committee Co-Chair (2014-15)
 - Lawyers Against Waste (Chair 2012-13; President's Award 2013)
 - Gender Fairness Committee (Co-Chair 2011-12)
 - Law Day Committee (Co-Chair 2010-11; President's Award 2011)
 - Juvenile Consequences Program (Co-Chair 2009-10)
 - Judicial Polls Committee (Co-Chair 2006-07)
 - Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee Member (2006-08)
 - HBA Advising Small Business Institute, Co-Chair and Speaker (Sept. 2006)
2. **HOUSTON LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE**
 - President (2008-09)
 - Director, Board of Directors (2007-10; 12 -13)
3. **ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN ATTORNEYS**
 - President (2011-12)
 - Board Member (2009-13)
 - Judicial Screening Committee (2010-12)
 - Premier Women in Law Luncheon Planning Committee and Scholarship Co-Chair (2011-12; committee member 2012-2017)
4. **FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION-Southern District of Texas Chapter, Board of Directors**
(2013 and 2014)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Trial Instructor for National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA)

- Assistant Team Leader -- National Session July 1986; Faculty Member 2008
- Louisiana Bar Association NITA Program May 1987
- NITA Southern Regional -- Assistant Team Leader 1987 – 1988; Faculty 2005; 2007; 2008; 2011
NITA Gulf Coast Regional -- Faculty Member - January 1988, 1991
- Deposition NITA-University of Houston Law Center -- Faculty Member 2003 – 09
- Deposition NITA-SMU -- Faculty Member 2006
- LSU School of Law Trial Advocacy Training Program, Section Leader 2013

Adjunct Professor - University of Houston Law Center--Legal Communications (1986 – 1987);
Trial Advocacy (2008-10)

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Greater Houston Partnership – Executive Women’s Partnership Committee (Leadership Council 2008-11; 2014-15; Vice Chair 2010; Chair 2011; Council of Chairs, Chair 2014)

Leadership Houston - Class XVIII; General Counsel (2009-12)

Women’s Business Enterprise Alliance (2005 – 2015)

Southwest YMCA. -- Member of Board of Directors (1993 - 1996)

Multiple Sclerosis Foundation -- MS150 Rider (1996, 1998, 1999, 2004 – 2008)

Chapelwood United Methodist Church, Member and past member of Board of Stewards

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Texas Minority Counsel Program - Recipient of Trailblazer Outside Counsel Award (2013) (award given annually to a lawyer who has done the most to promote diversity within the legal profession)

Houston Bar Association President's Award Recipient For Outstanding Service as Co-Chair of Law Week Committee (2010-11)

Houston Bar Association President's Award Recipient For Outstanding Service as Chair of Lawyers Against Waste Committee (2012-13)

Woman On The Move, Texas Executive Women (2012) (recognizes ten women on the move annually)

Best Lawyers In America, Employment Law (2009-20) (© 2008 by Woodward/White, Inc. of Aiken, SC)

Texas Monthly Super Lawyer (2004, 2007-19), by *Law & Politics Magazine*

Board Certified TBLS - Labor and Employment Law (2001 - Present)

Houston Bar Association, under Gibson’s leadership, earned the State Bar of Texas Award of Merit for the best overall programming by a large bar association; the Star of Achievement for its Teach Texas program and the Outstanding Partnership Award for its Juvenile Records Sealing Project

WHAT LAWYERS WHO HAVE WORKED WITH HER HAVE TO SAY ABOUT LAURA GIBSON¹

- Laura has made a lasting difference in organizations dedicated to promoting diversity in the legal profession. She has given an extraordinary amount of time to the TMCP, as a member of the Steering Committee (2007-2012), Co-Chair (2009 and 2010) and Chair of the Counsel Award Recognition Committee (2011). I personally observed her work tirelessly to implement innovative efforts to take the TMCP efforts to a new and sustainable level. I was amazed at the level of her commitment, the energy and enthusiasm she brought to the task, and the large number of people who knew her and obviously respected her contributions. For example, she suggested the “Dine Around” idea to create the opportunity for TMCP attendees to interact socially with fellow attendees. She suggested that, rather than raising money by cold calling from the old call list, we all call our own contacts and report on those calls. She also recruited the first and only presidential sponsor the TMCP ever had and they sponsored for three years at the \$10,000 level. Finally, under her leadership, the Counsel Award Recognition Committee developed the inaugural Trailblazer Outside Counsel of the Year Award. In addition to everything she is already doing for our profession and community, she has also served the last year as a mentor to a young woman attorney who is African American and is working in a contract position now but looking for a full time position.

Thomas J. Forestier, August 28, 2013

- I know Laura well and have had many opportunities to observe her-with awe. She is a transformational leader. She immediately rises to the top of every organization she joins, but more importantly, she brings vision and nurtures change. Laura thinks big, sweats the details, brings out the best in people and gets results. As an outgrowth of her passion for using the law as an instrument of change, she founded and now chairs the Liberty & Justice For All Task Force whose purpose is to educate the citizens of Texas about laws that suppress minority vote and to work towards legislative reform. This timely, but complex endeavor suits Laura’s can-do attitude and relentless spirit. As President of the Associate of Woman Attorneys, she created a gestalt around the organization that made people want to join and participate, to make it a force in helping women and to set its path as a vital, meaningful tool for progress in the legal community. Women often muse about another “I don’t know how she does it.” I observed that quandary about Laura more than anyone else I know. She is gracious in the face of adversity, tenacious in the face of resistance to change, thoughtful in the face of the status quo, and modest in light of her accomplishments.

Lynne Liberato, June 29, 2020

- Laura’s consistent and unwavering commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion in the legal profession for people of all underrepresented backgrounds is unparalleled and unmatched. Over the course of several years, I have witnessed Laura’s unreserved dedication to implementing transformative and innovative initiatives in the legal industry on the local and state level. Specifically, as a Steering Committee member and former Co-Chair of the Texas Minority Counsel Program, an initiative aimed at enhancing inclusion, diversity and equity for diverse attorneys and women lawyers, Laura developed new ways to introduce in-house attorneys from underrepresented backgrounds to their counterparts working in private practice for the enhancement of commercial and mentoring relationships. During her tenure, Laura also developed an award to recognize the efforts of attorneys who are committed to enhancing inclusion in the legal profession for diverse attorneys, including those who are LGBTQ+, from racially diverse backgrounds, and lawyers with different abilities. Because of her relentless pursuit of equity for these attorneys, Laura is also a past recipient of this award. Similarly, during her time on the board of directors and as President of the Houston Bar Association, Laura has diligently focused on projects and programming that provides diverse attorneys with leadership opportunities, mentoring, and the skills to succeed in our profession. For her commitment to diversity and inclusion and her overall dedication to improving our bar, Laura has won my unreserved endorsement for continuing to lead our profession to greater heights.

Travis Torrence, August 17, 2020

- Laura is a true pioneer in the field of mentorship. She perceives mentorship as a duty, a calling, and a reward. The biggest contributor to Laura’s effective mentorship style is the breadth of her self-awareness.

¹ Edited for brevity.

Appreciating others' personalities, behaviors and work approaches, Laura recognizes the importance of offering vision and guidance in a purposeful but unobtrusive manner. She has a true gift to awaken others' inner creativity by teaching mentees how to think, not what to think. She is engaging, insightful and honest. Through her encouragement, patience and stewardship, I found my confidence. She truly empowers others. Not only is Laura's mentorship style effective, she is a role model, change agent and advocate for diverse attorneys. Laura's constant striving to empower the lives of other women attorneys, when there are virtually no extrinsic motivations or rewards for doing so, is admirable. She embodies the unique reputation as a highly skilled trial attorney and formidable opponent, but also as a woman who puts others first, devotes a substantial amount of time to furthering our profession through mentorship, and as a champion for diversity. Laura has had a long and impressive career and she has inspired many women to follow in her accomplished footsteps. Her vision and leadership are remarkable and her mentorship has been transformative in my life and those of many others.

Alexis W. Foster, August 30, 2013

- I attended an AWA meeting and met Laura for the first time. She was the then President and after a short introduction, she encouraged me to get involved in the organization. A few weeks later and to my surprise, I received an email from the then Vice President of Communications informing me that Laura had recommended me as a candidate to join her AWA committee. A few months later I received a phone call from the President Elect of the AWA informing me that Laura had recommended me as a candidate to serve on her board. Again, I was grateful that Laura was seeking leadership opportunities to promote me, which allowed me to build invaluable relationships. I was [later] surprised to learn that I had been nominated as a candidate for Leadership SBOT. As a member of the 2012-2013 class, I participated in leadership training programs across the state with diverse attorneys and presented a group project during the annual meeting resulting in my appointment to the Women in Profession Committee. And I have Laura to thank for this amazing opportunity. I soon realized that I wasn't the only attorney that she altruistically supported. Many of the African American and Hispanic women lawyers that I have served on committees and boards with have done so through Laura's encouragement and efforts. I have yet to meet an attorney like Laura - she genuinely seeks to uplift and promote lawyers that she encounters within the profession. She is known for helping lawyers become successful for no personal gain but for the sake of passing on the torch.

Rabeea Sultan Collier, August 29, 2013

- I have always looked to Laura as a mentor. She and her partners established one of the first women-owned firms serving large, corporate clients. They demonstrated to me an alternative path for forging my own career, and I have looked to her as an example. I started my own women-owned firm with two partners in 2006...at a time where I lacked both confidence and connections. Laura helped me with both. She reached out to me and provided words of praise and encouragement in our early months. She asked me to join the Council of HBA's Labor & Employment Section when she was chairing it. Once I joined the Council, she suggested that I give a speech to the section in an area I was looking to develop. This boosted my exposure to my colleagues, as well as my confidence professionally. This culminated in my chairing the section. I would never have been able to achieve that if she had not looked out for me when I most needed assistance. She did so without asking for anything in return, or seeking for her own personal gain.

Samantha Barlow Martinez, August 26, 2013

- Laura's enthusiasm and personal commitment to advance and promote diversity within the legal profession could not be more clear. When she was President of the AWA, she sent an email that was truly inspiring and resulted in several of us joining the organization for the first time. I had the privilege of co-chairing the inaugural AWA Premier Women in Law Luncheon and quickly learned that she is a hard worker who really understands the role we can all play in advancing women and minorities in the legal profession. I worked with Laura on reviving the AWA Scholarship Program and learned even more about her personal commitment. She understands that diversity and inclusion is a journey, not a destination, and she also understands the importance of pipeline programs. Laura's hard work and dedication in her volunteer efforts and her professional excellence make her a formidable advocate for diversity.

Cisselon Nichols Hurd, August 30, 2013