

State Bar Board Meets in Austin

ON APRIL 12, THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MET IN AUSTIN FOR ITS QUARTERLY MEETING. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GATHERING INCLUDE:

Chair Elected—The board elected **Cindy Tisdale** of Granbury to serve as chair of the board of directors during 2013-2014. Tisdale is a second-year director representing District 14.

Assistance to Kaufman County—President **Buck Files** reported that the State Bar of Texas has donated \$5,000 to Crime Stoppers in Kaufman County to assist with the identification of those responsible for the deaths of Cynthia and Mike McLelland and Mark Hasse. McLelland was the Kaufman County district attorney and Hasse was an assistant district attorney. Files emphasized the bar's commitment to ensuring the administration of justice, especially when under attack.

Minority Directors Approved—**Regina Bynote Jones** of Houston and **Andrew Wallace** of Dallas were approved to serve as minority directors to the State Bar Board of Directors beginning in 2013 with terms expiring in 2016. Jones serves as general counsel to Schlumberger's research and manufacturing business segment. Wallace is a partner with Gordon & Rees, L.L.P., where he practices commercial and business litigation.

Amicus Brief—The board approved a request for the State Bar to file a neutral amicus brief in the case of *In Re Patrick McCann and Albert James Turner, relators*, in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. In this case, attorney Patrick McCann was held in contempt for refusing to turn over his client's file to subsequent counsel, in accordance with his client's instructions. The client is at the habeas stage in a death penalty case. The court requested briefs regarding who owns the client's file and related questions. The State Bar plans to provide an informational brief explaining that the file belongs to the client and asserting the importance of the attorney-client privilege.

Rules of Justice Court Cases—The board ratified the approval by the Ad Hoc Emergency Legislative Response Committee of a comment on Rules for Justice Court Cases. On April 1, President Files sent a letter to the Texas Supreme Court commenting that new Rule 500.4 appears to allow non-attorneys to represent individuals and businesses in justice courts. The concern is that the new rule appears to allow the unauthorized practice of law by non-lawyers.

Budget—The board approved the presentation of the 2013-2014 State Bar of Texas budget to the Texas Supreme Court.

Client Security Fund—The Client Security Fund Subcommittee reported that it had reviewed 106 applications, approving 86, and funding \$527,509 in grants to individuals who have lost money or property due to an attorney's misconduct. The board also approved the subcommittee's recommendation to increase the maximum amount allotted per claim from \$30,000 to \$40,000.

Health Insurance for Attorneys—The board approved funds to explore affordable health insurance options for members based on member interest assessed in a recent survey conducted through the Insurance and Member Benefits Subcommittee.

Resolutions—Austin attorneys **Fred Helms** and **Denise Hyde** were honored with resolutions for their service to the Austin community. Helms is an active volunteer at the Austin Bar Association veterans' legal clinics and has put together wills packages for families at National Adoption Day. Hyde has chaired the Austin Bar Association National Adoption Day for 10 years and is responsible for coordinating efforts to connect more than 450 children with new families.

Employee of the Quarter—State Bar Executive Director **Michelle Hunter** recognized Gabe Torres as the Employee of the Quarter. Torres joined the State Bar in 2005 as an internal support service specialist and was honored for his ongoing outstanding internal customer service and dedication to the State Bar of Texas.