

HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL DIVISION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

1985 - 1986

The Board participated with the Legal Assistants Committee of the Bar and paralegal educators in Texas Forum IV held in San Antonio, which featured a panel presentation on "Education of Legal Assistants in the Use of Computers."

A liaison was appointed to the Texas Association of Legal Secretaries (TALS).

January membership was reported at 1,491, exceeding by 34 the total membership in January 1985 and in January 1984 by 154. Six to ten membership applications per week were being processed. A sustaining membership category was added to include "any law firm, individual or entity interested in supporting the purposes and goals of the Division by making a monetary contribution." Sustaining members were not entitled to vote, hold office or serve on a committee in a voting capacity unless otherwise qualifying for active membership. It was also determined that associate members could serve as nonvoting members on committees.

Public hearings on the two proposals for voluntary certification of legal assistants were held in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock, San Antonio, and Tyler between the months of January and March. The hearings were open to legal assistants, attorneys, and others involved in the profession. There were 298 people who attended the hearings, and written comments were received from 187 people. A review of the comments and questions presented at the hearings indicated that further study and fact gathering should be conducted before the Board could proceed to make a final recommendation to the membership. The Board authorized the Professional Development Committee to proceed with its recommendation to better educate legal assistants, attorneys, and other interested parties about certification, and to develop more specific information on a proposal for certification and its implementation. An "Update" report of the certification investigation and recommendations was mailed to Division members, including a full Division Statement of Purpose for the development of a voluntary certification program.

The Board initiated an annual allocation of \$25,000 in a set-aside fund for the anticipated future expenses of implementing a certification program.

The following definition of a legal assistant, as adopted by the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association in February 1986, was adopted by the Division on June 19, 1986:

A legal assistant is a person, qualified through education, training, or work experience, who is employed or retained by a lawyer, law office, governmental agency, or other entity in a capacity or function which involves the performance, under the ultimate direction and supervision of an attorney, of specifically delegated substantive legal work, which work for the most part, requires a sufficient knowledge of legal concepts that, absent such assistant, the attorney would perform the task.

The Annual Meeting was held in Houston with approximately 75 in attendance and featured Lynn Sellers, a management consultant, as the keynote speaker. Sellers conducted a forum and a seminar on "Management of Interpersonal Relationships-The Professional Mark." Ron Stone, KPRC-Channel 2 newsman and host of "The Eyes of Texas," was the guest speaker at the luncheon. The Division, with the assistance of local/national associations, again sponsored an exhibit booth at the convention.

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Board of Directors
1985 - 1986**

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