

HISTORY OF THE PARALEGAL DIVISION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS

1999 - 2000

The Incoming Board met on June 12, 1999 in Fort Worth. President Sprinkle reported that the Texas Board of Legal Specialization had recently voted to remove the ethics requirements for recertification, and asked the directors to inform their members.

The following persons were to chair Division committees and President Sprinkle appointed each board advisor to the committee:

Annual Meeting Melinda Jackson and Ellen Lockwood, Co-Chairs
Debra Crosby, Board Advisor

Elections Jo Ann Sims, Chair
Kimberly Spivey, Board Advisor

Professional Ethics Ellen Lockwood, Chair
Pat Hammer, Board Advisor

Membership Laina Bartlow, Chair
Rhonda Brashears, Board Advisor

Professional Development Jodye Kasher, Chair
S. Kristine Farmer, Board Advisor

Publications Nancy McLaughlin, Chair
Connie Gray, Board Advisor

Public Relations Sharon Wagner, Chair
Diane McQuire, Board Advisor

President Sprinkle appointed the following board members to serve as liaisons:

NFPA – S. Kristine Farmer
NALA – Connie Gray
TYLA – Lisa Sprinkle and Javan Johnson
TALS/NALS – Martha Maze
Legal Administrators – Jan Bufkin
Historian – Melissa Sherman

A special committee was created to review the Division's Standing Rules and Bylaws and make recommendations to the Board. The members were appointed from the Board:

Special Committee on Bylaws and Standing Rules: S. Kristine Farmer, Chair
Javan Johnson, Member
Mike Sinder, Member
Leigh Burton, Member

President Sprinkle expressed the need to increase membership, and a quick and efficient way to accomplish this goal is to hold District-level continuing legal education seminars. Each Director is to appoint a person from within the district to serve on this committee.

An additional special committee was created to comply with the five-year review of the *Attorney's Guide to Practicing with Legal Assistants*:

Pat Hammer, Chair
Kimberly Spivey, Member
Mary McDowell, Member
Rhonda Brashears, Member

President Sprinkle gave her report and discussed the goals for the Division during the next fiscal year. Included in these goals were increasing visibility of the Division in our communities, investigating the feasibility of purchasing a laptop computer for use by the Division Secretary, and focusing members' attention on the benefits of members by including the listing in the director's

district newsletters.

President Sprinkle and the Board recognized Norma Hackler's accomplishments in becoming a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP).

The Board discussed the procedures for awarding a scholarship to LAU, and the scholarship committee will have recommendations at the Fall board meeting.

The Board of Directors met with the Standing Committee on Legal Assistants during Texas Forum XVIII on September 24, 1999. Following the Texas Forum, the Fall Board meeting was held on September 24-25, 1999 at the Red Lion Hotel in Austin. President Sprinkle gave her report, discussed the Memorandum of Understanding between the LAC and the Division, and reported that she was very pleased with the lines of communication between the LAC and the LAD. The Board ratified the Memorandum of Understanding between the LAC and the LAD Board.

President Sprinkle also reported the outcome of the Council of Chairs meeting. At that meeting, the UPL Task Force of the Bar was present and asked that every section and division of the Bar appoint a liaison to the committee. President Sprinkle appointed Debra Crosby as the Division's Liaison. The Council advised that the Bar intended to revamp the format of the Annual Meeting, but no specifics were available.

The *Texas Bar Journal* will be dedicating its March 2000 issue to Legal Assistants. President Sprinkle also reported the Division's Bylaws were on the Consent Agenda for the Bar Board for Saturday, September 25, 1999. A copy of the legal opinion obtained from the Tony Alvarado of the Bar was presented to the Board.

The Special Committee on Standing Rules and Bylaws gave its report. For the first time in Division history, the Board was faced with having to approve or deny membership or renewal applications to those applicants who had indicated a prior felony or misdemeanor conviction. The Board expressed their individual concerns over this issue, and two renewal applications for membership were approved while two applications for membership were denied. Due to the large number of proposed revisions to the Standing Rules, the Special Committee on Standing Rules and Bylaws were instructed by the Board to revisit the revisions and the majority of the Winter board meeting would be spent on approving the proposed revisions.

President Sprinkle appointed a special committee to create criteria and guidelines to be placed in the Procedures Manual regarding the approval and disapproval of applications when the applicant has been convicted of a felony.

The board discussed the overwhelming success of Legal Assistants University.

The Division's auditor, Johnny Lacy, CPA, presented his report. The Division reduced our retained earnings by \$9,000.00 last year, but the auditor felt that the Division was in sound financial condition and did not have any recommendations for the Board.

At the spring Board meeting, President Sprinkle reported that LAD's first LAU seminar earned a profit of \$26,085. It was reported that TAPA was going to be held in El Paso and the El Paso Association of Legal Assistants was planning a joint LAD/EPALA CLE event the day before the TAPA meeting. Membership totals were reported at 2,092. The Board approved, effective June 1, 2000, that the experience provision for active membership also would require proof of 10 hours of substantive CLE within the past 12 months. Numerous revisions to the Standing Rules were approved by the Board. A form letter was designed and incorporated into the Standing Rules with regard to requests for information about felony convictions. Procedures were added to the Procedures Manual with regard to the handling of renewals and applications for membership from individuals who had indicated a felony conviction.

S. Kristine Farmer was elected 2000-2001 President-Elect. Diane McQuire was elected Parliamentarian. Rhonda Brashears and Joan Beishir were elected Secretary and Treasurer, respectively.

The Long Range Planning Task Force reported that they would like to conduct one-on-one interviews of individual attorneys to get their opinions on regulation. Discussion was had.

The Board approved guidelines and procedures for awarding two scholarships to a LAD member to attend LAU.

LAD was informed that the LAC decided that they would not enforce the Joint Memo of Understanding. The LAD determined that the language of the Memo was too restrictive on the Division.

Even though the TPJ operates at a loss due to lack of advertisers, the Board decided that the TPJ was a member benefit and public relations tool.

The Outgoing Board Meeting for the 1999-2000 Board was held prior to the Annual Meeting in San Antonio. The LAC recommended to the LAD Board that terminology similar to the TBLS application for membership applications should be used with respect to felony convictions, etc. The Board approved the adoption of such language.

The Board approved a \$1,000 donation to the Fort Worth Bar Association for assistance after a tornado damaged the Fort Worth downtown area.

It was reported that an effort is underway by the U.S. House of Representatives to declare a National Paralegal Day.

The membership criteria was changed to allow legal assistants to work for a duly licensed attorney and not specifically a Texas attorney. This change addressed the needs of some corporate legal assistants in Texas.

Discussion was had regarding the Division's future with regard to spending. President Sprinkle reported that until commitments are received from other television stations across the state, she will not be taping anymore programs.

The Long Range Planning Task Force reported that they had completed all of the forums around the state and have all of the transcripts and videotapes. The Task Force will begin digesting them to get some conclusions.

Registration forms for LAU 2000 will be published in the June TPJ. The price is \$195.00 for Division members. Non-members cost will be \$265.00.

Director Brashears presented recommendations on behalf of the Membership Committee with regard to acceptable CLE that will meet the new Standing Rule regarding 10 hours of substantive CLE for Division membership.

One applicant was denied membership based on the application which indicated a felony conviction. The resume of the applicant indicated that the applicant was working as a legal assistant when the felony conviction occurred.

Director Burks reported that the LAD/EPALA CLE event held in conjunction with TAPA made a profit of \$500.

The Annual Meeting of the Division was held on June 23, 2000 at the Marriott River Center Hotel, San Antonio. Outgoing Directors for the 1999-2000 term were recognized. Sharon Wagner received the Exception Pro Bono Award and S. Kristine Farmer and Mr. Tommy Rodgers received the Pro Bono Partners Award. The Award of Excellence was presented to Nancy McLaughlin, Publications Chair. Chair of the Year was presented to Martha Jones. The keynote speaker was the Honorable Jerry L. Buchmeyer. The new officers and directors for 2000-2001 were installed.

Legal Assistants Division Board of Directors 1999 - 2000

Officers:

President:	Lisa Sprinkle, CLAS
President-Elect:	Javan Johnson, CLAS
Treasurer:	Deane Burks, CLAS
Secretary:	Rhonda Brashears
Parliamentarian:	Kristine Farmer

Directors:

Diane McQuire	District 1
S. Kristine Farmer	District 2
Patricia Hammer, CLA	District 3
Connie Gray, CLA	District 4
Debra Crosby	District 5
Jan Bufkin, CLA	District 6
Rhonda J. Brashears, CLA	District 7
Leigh Burton, CLA	District 8
Joyce Biggar	District 9*
Martha Maze, CLA	District 10
Mary McDowell, CLA	District 11
Kimberly Spivey, CLA	District 12
Carolyn Goff	District 13*
Javan Johnson, CLAS	District 14
Michelle Salazar	District 15**
Deane Burks, CLAS	District 16

* Appointed by Board via mail and email votes prior to the September 1999 Board Meeting. Vacancies were declared for these districts. The elected director for District 13 resigned prior to June 1999 Board Meeting. No member was elected director for District 9 during the 1999 Spring Elections.

**Resigned Fall, 1999. Michelle Salazar was appointed in January 2000 as District 15 Director.