



2025 - 2026

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A Letter from the New President



Marisa Allen

As the news reels continue to show the incredible amount of devastation and destruction along the Guadalupe River, my heart becomes heavier and heavier with concern for all affected. Lives have been lost and upended, homes destroyed, businesses and livelihoods lost, and communities forever changed.

In the immediate aftermath of disasters, there is often an outpouring of attention, resources, and compassion. News coverage is constant, donations flow in, and communities rally to provide emergency aid. These immediate responses are critical—they save lives and offer comfort in the darkest of moments. But as the headlines fade and the initial urgency passes, the long, difficult work of rebuilding begins. It is during this phase that support is needed most. Rebuilding is not only about repairing homes and roads; it's about restoring a sense of normalcy, healing emotional wounds, and addressing the complex legal, financial, and logistical challenges that arise in the weeks, months, and even years following a disaster. We must not allow time or distance to dull our sense of responsibility. True recovery requires sustained attention, continued advocacy, and long-term commitment from every corner of our community—including the legal profession.

Our legal community has a unique role to play in times of crisis. Whether helping navigate insurance claims, securing temporary housing, assisting with lost documents, or providing pro bono legal services, we are resources. As attorneys, we often encounter people at some of the most challenging moments of their lives. We know the value of support, advocacy, and simply being present. That same

spirit must guide us now.

I would like to encourage all of us, as guardians of justice, to find meaningful ways to help. Support organizations that are implementing effective relief programs, along with those that are planning for the recovery and rehabilitation phase. The Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country is already working with area leaders, nonprofits, and government entities on flood relief and recovery projects. Funds in their "Kerr County Flood Relief Fund" will be used for the many components of relief, recovery, and rebuilding. Visit their website: www.communityfoundation.net for more information.

Our State Bar of Texas is also at the forefront of support efforts. President Santos Vargas' "Stand with Santos" access to justice campaign is dedicating all donations made during the month of July to legal aid disaster relief in the Hill Country (www.standwithsantos.org). Additionally, the Texas Bar Foundation has an Emergency Disaster Relief Fund that provides for programs focused on relief and recovery, legal assistance and support, and administration of justice in disaster-impacted communities (www.txbf.org/emergency-disaster-relief).

I'm genuinely grateful for the incredible work so many of you are already doing through pro bono cases, community education, or simply treating every client with dignity regardless of their ability to pay. I would also like to express much gratitude to our past President, Nick Pesina, and all of the past Presidents and board members, for their dedication, time, and commitment to growing and strengthening our Bar Association.

Let us continue to move forward with empathy, determination, and an unwavering commitment to each other and to the well-being of our communities.



WHAT ARE THE LEGAL NEEDS FOLLOWING A DISASTER?



Graphic credit to the Texas Access to Justice Project

When we think of disaster response, legal assistance and access to justice are not always top of mind—but they should be. In addition to the immediate needs of food, clothing, and shelter, those affected by disasters often face complex legal challenges. From lost documents and housing issues to insurance claims and probate matters, survivors need access to professional, ethical legal support to begin rebuilding their lives.

Learn how you can help: www.texasdisasterlegalhelp.org/volunteer

TRLA

LEGAL RESPONSE AFTER DISASTER: ASSISTING SURVIVORS OF THE HILL COUNTRY FLOODS

CLE Webinar

Hosted by Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
and Texas Disaster Legal Task Force



TRLA
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid



**MONDAY, JULY 21
12:00PM CST**

Register in advance.

Hosted by the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid and the Texas Disaster Legal Task Force, this one-hour CLE will equip attorneys with the knowledge to assist survivors in navigating post-disaster legal issues. Presenters will cover common civil legal needs after a disaster—such as housing, benefits, and contractor fraud—as well as recent changes to FEMA Individual Assistance. Attendees will also learn how to connect with legal aid efforts and support survivors through direct service or referrals.



TRLA CLE



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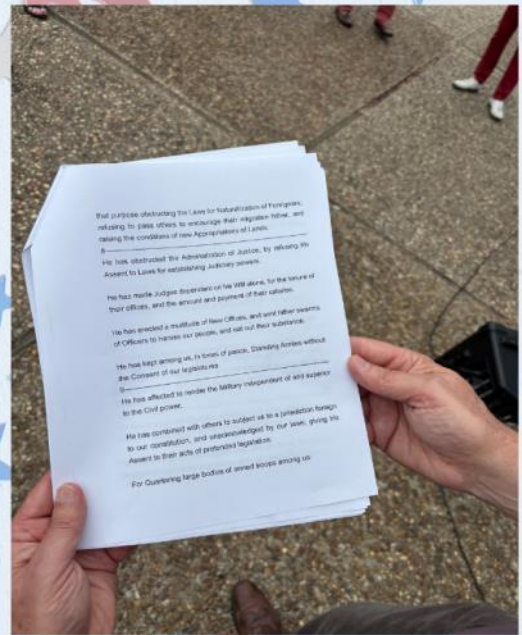
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Celebrating the Declaration of Independence



Many thanks to
the Smith
County Criminal
Defense Lawyers
for organizing
and continuing
the annual
reading of the
Declaration of
Independence!



JULY CLE

Maternal & Fetal Rights in Texas

presented by
Mr. Andy Navarro



Andy Navarro, with the Christus Mother Frances Health System, lead us through an intriguing overview of key US Supreme Court cases, along with Texas laws in the wake of the 2022 Dobbs decision.

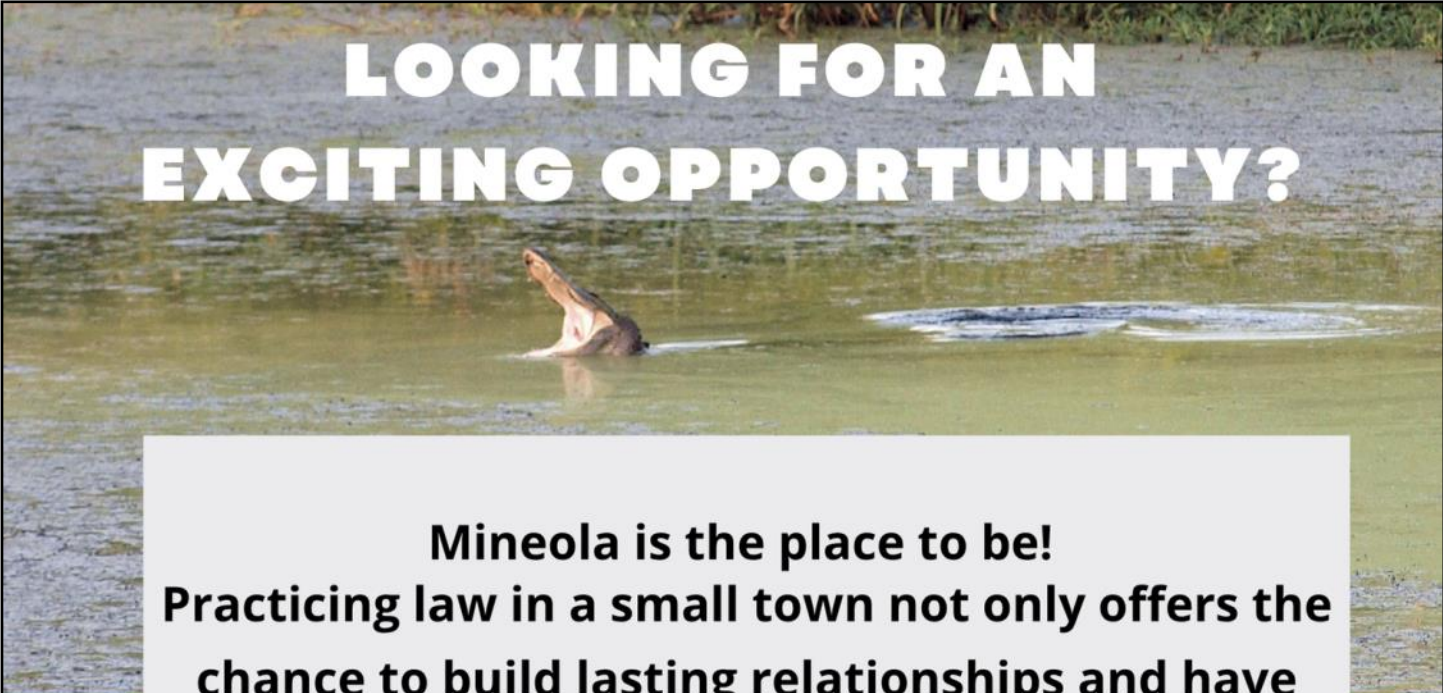




Remembering the **Honorable Bill Bass**

The Honorable James William (Bill) Bass, Jr. passed away on June 20. Justice Bass was a man of incredible intelligence, passion, determination, and wit. He served our country in the US Army and with NATO forces in Germany, before going to law school. It was during law school that he found his passion for public service and was elected to the Texas House of Representatives (during his first year, no less!). He was an advocate for justice, even if it meant going against the grain and going against those in power. He was a part of the "Dirty Thirty" in the Texas House that changed the course of politics. He was close friends with Congressman Charlie Wilson and joined his efforts to take down the USSR and communism across Eastern Europe. He carried his passion for justice to the 12th Court of Appeals when he was appointed by Governor Mark White and served until he retired. In 2017, along with receiving the Smith County Bar Foundation's Justinian Award, the Texas Senate passed Resolution #105 in recognition of his incredible service to Texas, Smith County, and beyond.

Thank you to all who attended his service on June 28 and shared stories about his incredible life and career. Our community has been blessed by the incredible life of Justice Bass and we are ever thankful for him!



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Thank you for your continued participation with and support of the SCBA.

Visit
www.smithcountybar.com
 to renew your membership
 or join a section!

Important SCB Dates

Local Bar Leaders Annual Meeting
 July 24-25, *Houston*

No SCBF Board Meeting!

SCBF Development Committee Meeting
 July 22, *TBD*

No SCYLA Board Meeting!

No SCBA Board Meeting!

Smith County Courthouse Closed
 July 4

SCBA Office Closed
 July 17-18

July 23 - 25



The SCBF is a 501/c/3, EIN 81-0585550

Mission Statement

Furthering justice and promoting the rule of law by providing resources and education to the community.

Interested in including the SCBF in your estate planning? Have non-cash assets and would like a charitable deduction? Give me a call - we can help!
beth@smithcountybar.com

[Click here if you would like to honor someone with a gift to the Foundation.](#)

Thanks to all for honoring your loved ones

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