

## State Bar of Texas Board of Director's Meeting on 06-17-21

CHARLIE GINN: It is 9:06 a.m. by my watch. And I'm calling this meeting to order. Please forgive us - our light issue this morning. We're experiencing some technical difficulties, so you can just brighten your screen at home if you're watching. I'm going to ask Mr. Executive Director Trey Apffel to call the roll, please.

TREY APFFEL: Mr. Agosto. Mr. Almanzan. Mr. Baruch. Miss Bihm. Miss Brooker. Mr. Calvillo. Mr. Carlos Cardenas. Mr. Luis Cardenas. Mr. Cavazos. Mr. Charbonneau. Miss Clarke has an excused absence. Miss Cordova. Mr. Crosley. Miss Davis. Judge Earle. Miss Hernandez Ferrier. Miss Borunda Firth. Mr. Fischer. Miss Forbes. Miss Gibson. Mr. Ginn.

CHARLIE GINN: Here.

TREY APFFEL: Mr. Goss. Mr. Harris. Miss Harrison. Miss Hoskins. Mr. Huddleston. Mr. Hurst. Mrs. Ronnie. Miss Kern. Mr. Kroger. Justice Lehrmann. Miss Cortes Mares. Mr. McDonald. Mr. McDougal. Miss Carra Miller. Miss Mount. Miss Murphy. Miss Naylor has an excused absence. Judge Newell. Miss Rispoli. Mr. Ritter. Mr. Schramek. Mr. Sciumbato. Miss Scott. Mr. Sergi.

DAVID SERGI: Here.

TREY APFFEL: Mr. David Smith. Mr. Jason Smith. Mr. Michael Smith. Mr. Todd Smith. Miss St. Yves. Mr. Sud. Mr. Tobey. Mr. Tolchin. Judge Truncale. Mr. Vargas.

SANTOS VARGAS: Here.

TREY APFFEL: Mr. Vasquez. Miss Pack Wilson. Miss Wooten. Chair, we have a quorum.

CHARLIE GINN: I'm glad we have a quorum. We had a great time last night, and I worried about that a little bit. I'm going to ask my friend Director Diane St. Yves to come and please lead us in the invocation.

DIANE ST. YVES: Let us bow our heads. Heavenly Father, through your grace, we are gathered today to work for the benefit of our members and the state of Texas. Through your grace, we are humbled by the work of your hands through scientists, researchers and first responders so we can gather here today, exchange handshakes and hugs, dine together, share thoughts, do the work and plan for the next year and the years to come. We honor you, our members, the public and all who made today possible. We ask that you work through our hands, our hearts and our minds to the benefit of all. We are grateful for your grace. Amen.

CHARLIE GINN: I ask my friend Director Adam Schramek to please come and lead us in the pledges.

ADAM SCHRAMEK: I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all. Honor the Texas flag. I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible.

CHARLIE GINN: Thank you Adam and thank you Diane for your words this morning. We're going to hear remarks from the general public. So we'd like to welcome any members of the public who are present. And note that anyone from the public who wishes to speak should sign the blue sign-in card that's located in the back. Each member of the public who wishes to address the board will be given three minutes in which to make his or her presentation. If there's a specific topic of discussion that you'd like

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to speak on, please indicate that on the card. I don't think we have any public speakers this morning. But I just want to make sure. I don't see any. All right. It's now time for me to hand over my gavel to my successor. And I would ask Justice Lehrmann as I'm talking to please come. And, Santos, I'm glad you're already here so you don't have to come forward. Very fortunate to have worked with Santos for the last two years. You all are getting a wonderful chair. And I want to read you a couple of his accomplishments because I think it's important that you know that you're getting a chair that has a history of service in the bar. He served as a director for the last two years from San Antonio. In San Antonio, he served as the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer and director of the San Antonio Bar Association. He served on the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association as the president, president-elect, vice president, secretary and director. He served on the State Bar of Texas Local Bar Services Committee from August 2012 to 2019 as a member and chair. He served on the State Bar of Texas annual meeting committee from October to July of 2015. He's a fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation, a fellow of the San Antonio Bar Foundation, a member of the William Sessions American Inn of Court, a graduate of the Leadership San Antonio class 34, a member of the Alex Briseno Leadership Development Program of '05 and a founding member of Vision San Antonio from 2004 to 2010. He has demonstrated over the last two years and you have trusted him with your votes because he is a fine man, a fine leader and a better friend. And you all are in wonderful hands. And I - my prayer for Santos is that he is blessed with the same board and the same respect that y'all gave a 31-year-old kid that didn't know what he was doing. Santos, you are going to make a fantastic chair. And I'm so glad that you're my friend, and I welcome you. And I'd ask Justice Lehrmann to swear you in.

: (APPLAUSE)

DEBRA LEHRMANN: Let me say that this is a true honor to be able to swear in this wonderful, wonderful public servant today. Raise your hand. I, Santos Vargas...

SANTOS VARGAS: I, Santos Vargas...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...Do solemnly swear...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...Do solemnly swear...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...That I will faithfully execute...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...That I will faithfully execute...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...The duties of the office of chair of the board...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...The duties of the office of chair of the board...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...Of the State Bar of Texas...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...Of the State Bar of Texas...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...And will to the very best of my ability...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...And will to the very best of my ability...

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DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...Preserve...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...Preserve...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...Protect...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...Protect...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...And defend...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...And defend...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...The Constitution of the laws of the United States...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...The Constitution of the laws of the United States...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...And of this state...

SANTOS VARGAS: ...And of this state...

DEBRA LEHRMANN: ...So help me God.

SANTOS VARGAS: ...So help me God.

: (APPLAUSE)

CHARLIE GINN: Hold on, Santos. Now - presenting you now with your gavel. You might want to bring it to the meetings and congratulations.

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you, Charlie. Thank you so much.

: (APPLAUSE)

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you, Justice Lehrmann. Thank you, Charlie. Charlie, I can't thank you enough. You've been an outstanding chair of the board. You've been an amazing mentor. And you've been an even better friend to all of us. I think I speak for everybody in this room when I say that we feel so fortunate that we've been able to experience this with you. And we feel even more fortunate that we still have you for another year. So, Charlie, I can't thank you enough. I look forward to working with you. And I can't thank you enough for everything that you've done. Sylvia, I'm looking forward to working with you. I think we're going to do some really good things together. And I really don't see how we can go wrong when we have Laura by our side. Everyone, I'm really humbled. The emotions that are, you know, going through my mind right now are hard to explain. I'm humbled to be here. I'm thrilled to be working with all of you. I think that we're going to have a great board year. And I look forward to all of the great things that we can accomplish. So here's to the next board year, everybody. Thank you so much.

: (APPLAUSE)

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SANTOS VARGAS: I want to take a little bit of time to talk about board and committee assignments. So directors, at your places, you're going to see a list of all of your new board committee assignments, standing committee assignments and section assignments. Trey, Sylvia and I and several of the staff members of the state bar spent hours and hours and a lot of thought went into putting these committee assignments together. All of these committees are extremely important. We placed everybody in the place that we thought was best for them and best for the state bar. And so, now it's time to get to work, everyone. So one of the first things that I want you to do is find out who the heads of these standing committees are, who the chairs are. The leadership in these different sections, get to know them. Send them an email. Introduce yourself to them. Make sure that you're reaching out to them so that they know you, so that they know to reach out to you and so that you get invited to their meetings. We want you to be the liaison to these boards. We want you to be the liaisons to these sections. We want you to share information and get information back from them. And so, now it's time to get to work, get to know them, work - make sure that you work with alternate advisers if you're a primary adviser. And alternate advisers, make sure that you work with the primary advisers to make sure that everybody's showing up at every meeting. I think that we have a great group. I think that you guys are going to enjoy your assignments. And I'm looking forward to a great year. I think now it's time for Justice Lehrmann to come back up. We're going to swear in our new incoming president of the board. I'm sorry - president-elect of the board. I apologize. As - let me introduce our new president-elect of the board of directors, Laura Gibson. Laura has been practicing for 37 years. She's a partner at Dentons where she practices commercial litigation and heads the Texas labor and employment section. She served as board chair from 2018 to 2019 and as a director from 2012 to 2015 and 2018 to 2019. Laura Gibson was board chair whenever I first came onto the board. She was extremely kind. I think most people in this room that know Laura share that experience with her. She's going to be a fantastic president whenever she becomes president of the state bar. And Laura, I can't wait to work with you.

DEBRA LEHRMANN: Another great honor - I've had the good fortune of being able to work with Laura on various things over the past decade. And as all of you know, she is going to bring so much to this group of wonderful lawyers that do so much for the people of this great state. It is truly my privilege to swear her in. I, Laura Gibson...

LAURA GIBSON: I, Laura Gibson...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Do solemnly swear...

LAURA GIBSON: ...Do solemnly swear...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...That I will faithfully execute...

LAURA GIBSON: ...That I will faithfully execute...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...The duties of the office of president-elect...

LAURA GIBSON: ...The duties of the office of president-elect...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...At the State Bar of Texas...

LAURA GIBSON: ...At the State Bar of Texas...

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DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And will to the best of my ability...

LAURA GIBSON: ...And will to the best of my ability...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Preserve...

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DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Protect...

LAURA GIBSON: ...Protect...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ..And defend...

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DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...The Constitution and the laws of the United States...

LAURA GIBSON: ...The Constitution and the laws of the United States...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And of this state...

LAURA GIBSON: ...And of this state...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...So help me God.

LAURA GIBSON: ...So help me God. I feel so grateful to be here. Thank you for your support, and I look so forward to working with this board. As your new president-elect, I will work really hard to continue to improve the lives of all lawyers, but especially the lives of small lawyers and solo lawyers because I know how lonely it can be to practice law in a small environment. I had my own firm with my husband for about 25 years. We started with four lawyers and, I think, the highest we ever got was six. And I left there in 2015 to join Dentons, which is the largest law firm in the world, but in Houston there are only six of us. So it's kind of a hybrid. I have come up with some ideas that I'd like to accomplish during my year as president, but as we heard from everybody yesterday, your bar year is not what you plan. It's what you get. So I'm hopeful that I can do some of these things as president-elect and then handle whatever is thrown my way when I'm sworn in. My three ideas for my platform are a program called All Rise. It will be a mentoring program for newly licensed lawyers who are diverse so that they can get to know one another in their communities and learn from each other, and then quarterly the bar would host events in their cities where they would get to interact with more seasoned lawyers in their communities, network with the entire group of small groups together. And my hope is that they can replicate the bonding that goes on with Leadership SBOT. Leadership SBOT is an absolutely fabulous program, but only 25 to 30 lawyers in this state get to participate and I'd really like to do something on a larger scale. So I hope to work with the Office of Minority Affairs to use the engine that they already have in place to provide that service to our newly licensed lawyers. The second program I have is what I'm calling the We Care Campaign, and it's to try to help those lawyers for whom outward indications are that they are at risk for death by suicide. I saw on Sunday Morning many years ago a study about - that was done in 1976 and it involved patients who'd been hospitalized for severe depression or risk of death by suicide. And what the doctor in that instance did was decide to write quarterly typewritten letters

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that were signed to all of - the half of the group of the patients in the first study. So some of them got a one paragraph typed letter saying we care about you. We hope that you're doing okay. The others got no letter. And what they found out is that the rate of death by suicide for the lawyers who got that simple letter was half of those who did not. And in my view if we can save the life of even one lawyer it's worth it. And Seana Willing and her group, and Chris Ritter and TLAP have agreed to start writing letters on a confidential basis to lawyers who are at risk by death by suicide to tell them we care. You know, you hear so many stories about someone who commits suicide or about - is about to have death by suicide who said if somebody just asked me how I was doing that day I'd chose to live another day. So hopefully with this simple and inexpensive program we can change the lives of a lawyer - lots of lawyers. And the third one is called Lean On Me. So two years ago we created the succession planning program where in literally less than five minutes a lawyer can go to our website and designate a custodian attorney. And this custodian attorney would not take over the lawyer's practice, but that lawyer would step in if a solo practitioner or someone else in a small firm did not have anybody else who could wrap up their practice if they died or disappeared or became disabled. So in that instance what would happen is the designated custodian helps to return those client files to the client so that they're not left in a lurch and the practice can be shut down. With that idea what I thought is we could do Lean On Me where each of our lawyers could designate someone to act as their grievance support attorney. And what that would mean - let's say I designated Benny as my grievance support attorney. If a grievance was filed against me and I did not respond, then I would be giving Benny - I would giving the State Bar permission to call Benny and say Laura's had a grievance filed against her. She hasn't filed a response. Would you call her and encourage her to file a response? Because most of the cases that go into litigation are those where the lawyer hasn't filed a response. And all of us are Type A personalities. All of us, I believe, want to do the best we can for our client. But sometimes when we can't do our best job and somebody is angry with us or upset with our performance it may be just too much for us to take to secure on our own oxygen mask and respond to that grievance. But, hopefully, with the support of a friend like Benny I could get through that, and I could file a response, and I could keep the problem from escalating and being much worse than it needs to be. So those are my three platforms that I hope to accomplish. Now, let me tell you a little bit about the spices you have on your desk. I call it special blend. It's a secret recipe in my family, and it's no coincidence in my belief that its initials special blend are also the initials of the state bar. You know, you heard yesterday from the third year directors, and they told you when they walked into that new director orientation they didn't know anyone else in their class. They hadn't been tapped on the shoulder by the state bar or invited in through a secret door to come be an insider and work on the State Bar Board. Instead they all got there different ways. Whether it be their local bar association, a bar committee, a minority affairs program, they got here in a different way but they were committed to lead. And they all got - took the time to sign and get petitions so that they had the privilege to run as a state bar director. And they got that privilege and they got here, and they realized that the state bar is really working hard to make the lives of our lawyers better. And, you know, I feel like you saw yesterday - it was so beautiful to watch - the bonds that that board yesterday, the outgoing board, formed. And to me what happens in this room and what happens in every one of our meetings, and the new directors - three years will be here before we know it. But what we have the opportunity is to create a special blend so that when you leave this board you will have lifelong friends. And you all have so much in common because you've worked to serve the lawyers of our state. So thank you for your time to listen to this, and I look forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. Thank you.

: (APPLAUSE)

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SANTOS VARGAS : Thank you so much, Laura. Now I'd like to ask all of the new directors who are joining the board this year to come forward, including all of the new elected directors, public members, liaisons and section representatives, and also ask Justice Lehrman to come up and swear in the new board.

DEBRA LEHRMAN: This way? This way?

SANTOS VARGAS : There it is. That's perfect. Turn the mic around.

TREY APFFEL III: Paul, turn that mic around.

SANTOS VARGAS : There we go.

DEBRA LEHRMAN: OK, exciting, exciting time. And this is really my pleasure to swear all of you in - many of whom I've known for many years - and know that y'all are going to do great, great things and I just can't wait to watch. So please raise your right hands. I, say your name..

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: (Inaudible).

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Do solemnly swear...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...Do solemnly swear...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...That I will faithfully execute...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...That I will faithfully execute...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...The duties of the board of directors...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...The duties of the board of directors...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Of the State Bar of Texas...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...Of the State Bar of Texas...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And will to the very best of my ability...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...And will to the very best of my ability...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Preserve...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...Preserve...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...Protect...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...Protect...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And defend...

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UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...And defend...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...The Constitution...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...The Constitution...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And laws of the United States...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...And laws of the United States...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...And of this state...

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ...And of this state...

DEBRA LEHRMAN: ...So help me God.

UNIDENTIFIED GROUP: ....So help me God.

DEBRA LEHRMAN: Congratulations.

SANTOS VARGAS : Congratulations, new board members. We're very excited and happy to have you with this. To Sylvia Borunda Firth, our incoming president who will take office tomorrow, we want to present you with the traditional Rosewood gavel. It's symbolic of your leadership and the great opportunity and responsibility we have as we work together for our profession and for the public. We're blessed to be Texas lawyers and to be officers of the court, and we take that responsibility seriously. We work - we look forward to working with you, Sylvia.

: (APPLAUSE)

SYLVIA BORUNDA FIRTH: Good morning, everyone. I'm really excited to be here today. This is such an honor and a privilege to me. As Randy mentioned yesterday, I came to state bar service very late in my career. I was not like some of you who started at TYLA and worked your way up and have served lots of committees. But, I think, I represent the majority of lawyers that are out there. The majority of the lawyers who really don't pay much attention to what the state bar is doing. I mean, those of us that work at this very diligently we know - we know this inside and out. But most of the lawyers don't. Most of the lawyers trust us to do what's right for the profession. They trust us to make sure that the grievance process is fair. If you're unfortunate enough to receive a grievance notice in the mail, they trust that they're going to be treated fairly. They trust us to make - to provide good, solid CLE and they trust us to protect the profession and serve - help them to serve the public best of their ability. So this is a heavy burden, but it's an honor to serve that. You know, I think that we need to be mindful of that when we come here to every one of these meetings. There is 106,000 lawyers out there who are depending upon us to preserve and protect not only the Constitution, but our profession. So I ran - and I ran for president late in my career, and I ran because I felt like it was important for the leadership of the state bar to reflect to the 21st century demographics of our membership. We talked about it a little bit yesterday when when Joe Escobedo presented the information from the Diversity Task Force. And lawyers and the public should see a state bar with leaders that are diverse in gender, race, ethnicity, gender identity and orientation practice Syrian geography, and not just for show, not just because it's the PC thing to do. I think that it's - what I'm looking for is for the better outcomes that come from

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having diverse points of view. And this past year has brought disruption and hardship on a grand scale to the world, to our nation, and, of course, to our bar. And we have many challenges ahead of us, but still this is really a time for opportunity. I don't know about the rest of y'all, but just showing up here for this week and being able to be together it felt like a renewal, right? We've been kind of shut away and here we got a - we get a reset. That's what I've been calling it. It's a reset. And we need to keep emphasizing that the 21st century State Bar of Texas is a place where all are welcome and all are encouraged to get involved in our unique system of self-governance, because the State Bar of Texas is all of us, all 106,000 members, not just the people in this room, not just the state bar staff. And we're stronger when we work together. So I'm speaking to everyone who may be watching. So whoever you are, wherever you practice, whatever your political or religious beliefs or your lack thereof, whether you're a big firm lawyer or a solo or something in between, there's a place for you to get involved. And like we talked about yesterday, Randy mentioned and said Laura had done it before. Go get five more. That's my challenge to each one of you all. And as Santos said this morning, spread the word. The state bar does amazing things, and most lawyers - because we live it every day we think everybody knows. We think everybody knows about all of these programs and they don't. I have personally - one of the very first phone calls I got when I was a newly appointed minority director was from a woman lawyer who was a mentor of mine when I was at the firm and her husband had suffered a massive stroke. And he's a lawyer. He was - he is a lawyer. Thank God he's still alive. He's a lawyer as well, but different kind of practice. She was a real estate transactional lawyer. Her husband was a litigator. And she didn't really know what to do, and it became very obvious very quickly that he was not going to be returning to the practice of law. And she said, how - what do I do? I don't even know who to call. I don't know what to do. And I was able to help her with the assistance of state bar staff with what needed to be done. Now we have a more formalized program because of the good work that was done when Laura was the chair of the board. So we need to get the word out and need to be able to tell people about these programs. So when you go out speak about them. Pick a couple of them, talk to Lowell and the others. We have the presentations in the can that Randy did - 30 minutes 30 benefits. There's lots of things. But it's really important for us to make lawyers understand that we're here for them and we've got these great programs. So, you know, I talked a little bit during orientation about civility and respect, and I want that to be our theme because, I think, it's important. And together I want us all to work for a more unified state bar. I want us to strive for unity and - but not uniformity. We don't have to be the same. I think, it was Shari Goldsberry on her way out the door said don't be afraid to be the voice of dissent. I agree with that. We don't all need to show up here and rubber stamp what the others are saying and always agree. But when we agree, we need to do it with respect and disagree without being disagreeable. That's the higher calling of a lawyer. So at a time marked by rising incivility, when our trust in institutions and even each other seems to sink lower every day. We want to be known for the dignity, integrity and professionalism that this Texas Lawyer's Creed employs us to embody in our interactions with others and each other. So I want you all to be mindful of that. And we need all 106,000 members engaged because there's so much work to do as everyone says. You've been hearing about this. You've gotten a hint of it, new members. Lawyer wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, mentoring new lawyers and helping each other continue to emerge from the pandemic are just a few of my priorities for the year ahead. And I will also work to improve access to justice. And I want to focus some attention on an issue that was brought to me very early on in my campaign because I started in my own backyard. I left El Paso and drove east and hit Alpine, Pecos, far West Texas and the lawyers who'd never meet - that was funny. And I called them up and said I want to come and speak to your local bar association. And they have one in name, but it's West Texas so they take great pride in the fact they never meet. They don't have meetings so... Yeah, we're out here. We're independent. But it was close to the holiday and so one of them said, you know what? I think, we should get together for a holiday party, and if we invite you will you come? And I said yes. And so the party turned into discussion, and they talked about the great need

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for lawyers out in the more rural areas of the state. And it really stayed with me, and, I think, I even spoke to Trey. And I said, Trey, I'm only just a candidate and I'm not the president, but we got an issue out here in West Texas. There's a problem there. There are no lawyers out here to take criminal appointments. The lawyers that are the federal public defenders are having difficulty recruiting lawyers to move out here, and we have an access to justice issue that I'll - let's put a pin in that and come back and visit it. But as I went into other areas up in the Panhandle. It was an issue that was in different pockets of the state. So we have 106,000 lawyers, but most of them are gathered in the metroplex areas of the state. Even El Paso has a little bit of an issue with lawyers - the lawyer - number of lawyers. Just put a pin in it. But I want to visit with you all about that and what the state bar can do to help bring lawyers there. There's working together with Kenda Culpepper and the criminal defense lawyer groups, etc. I think, we may have some room for that. And also want a renewed focus on legal needs of veterans. I'm from El Paso. We have one of the largest veterans communities in the state. We do have a veterans' court, and El Paso's pretty - does pretty well by way of our veterans. But that's not true everywhere and it's waning interest. I have a really good friend who has a nonprofit and it's based out of San Antonio that deals with lawyer - with veterans who have suffered traumatic brain injuries. And, I think, most of y'all know from the news - there's lots of them. And they have particular legal issues that need to be addressed. So that's another one of my initiatives that I want to work on in addition to all the diversity equity and inclusion stuff that you've heard of. So I want to make sure that the state bar is meeting this historic moment in time by supporting Texas lawyers and our fellow Texans as we navigate our way back and into the new normal. Anyone who's known me for a long time, you know, I worked in government a lot so I got lots of employee evaluations, you know, the formal things, and they would always say I'm a problem solver. I'm a coalition builder, and I try to be an effective communicator, but most of all I'm extremely proud to be a Texas lawyer. And I'm honored to use whatever skills I've been blessed with in service to my fellow lawyers and as president of the state bar and invites you to come along with me. We're gonna have a great ride. Thank you.

: (APPLAUSE)

SANTOS VARGAS : Thank you, Sylvia. You're going to be a fantastic president and we're lucky to have you. I'd now like to recognize our executive director, Mr. Trey Apffel.

TREY APFFEL III: Thank you, Santos, and congratulations, Santos. Congratulations, Laura, and congratulations to the new board members. Your hardest job, as I always say at this time every year, will be to exercise good judgment. Let me start by saying the state of the state bar is strong, and the state of the state bar leadership is strong. This is my roll call sheet, and it seems like maybe to those watching that when I call roll it's like a ministerial act. But I don't look at it like that. Every time I call roll I have chills go down my spine. And that happens because that roll call is a call to service. And, I know, by watching you - and I watch everybody. I size you up. I look at you, I see what your strengths are. I see where you come from. You know, how you handle yourself. And I would imagine y'all do that to me too, and that's natural. But what I see in this room is an incredible array of talent, certainly leadership, but an - it's like a melting pot as they say. And you all bring your individual talents and your individual experiences to this body to serve the legal profession. I said yesterday in the orientation to our new board members, every project we undertake, every dollar we spend, we do it with our mission statement and purpose clause in mind. And as long as we follow that blueprint and that roadmap, the state of the state bar will always remain strong. As Sylvia mentioned about civility and respect and as Randy mentioned yesterday, I encourage you - listen. But you got to listen to both sides because there are very important factors involved and the role you play in the self-regulation of the legal profession. And you have to keep in mind, we - if we don't protect the right of self-regulation, we will have failed. So

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everything we do, every effort we make, we have to keep in mind the right of self-regulation. That's our responsibility. And if I think that we are falling short of that, I will let you know respectfully. So I challenge you to be the best that you can be. And I know you will be. I'm not kidding when I say chills go down my spine during roll call. Call me a roll-call nerd, but that's what happens. And, I mean, my heart starts pumping when I call roll. I want you to know that. And I do it because I'm in awe of you. Good luck, and let's have a great year. Thank you.

: (APPLAUSE)

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you so much, Trey. I now call our general counsel, Mr. Ross Fischer, to provide his report. No report? And so, next is our legal counsel, Mr. John Sirman.

JOHN SIRMAN: No remarks.

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you. I think everybody in the audience appreciates that. With that, I'd call on Jeanine Rispoli to come up and provide the Texas Young Lawyers Association report.

JEANINE RISPOLI: Good morning.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #1: Good morning.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Good morning.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #3: Good morning, Jeanine.

JEANINE RISPOLI: Wow. I have wanted to be an attorney my entire life. A lot of you I have seen at advanced family law, at state bar meetings. It is truly an honor that I am deeply grateful for to serve with you and to serve TYLA. We heard a lot yesterday about, allegedly, the hardest working board - or committees on this board. I'm confident that TYLA is the most passionate and that we continue to work on being welcoming and inclusive. This year, we are focusing on civility. That seems to be the theme for everyone. And I don't think we can get enough of it. Former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said, unfortunately, civility is hard to codify or legislate. Discourtesy is notoriously subjective. You know it when you see it. And assessing blame is somewhat akin to asking a pair of fighting fourth graders who started it. In the end, it is by deed rather than by decree that attorneys treat each other - teach each other that it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable. Our Madam President Sylvia just talked about disagreeing without being disagreeable. I think that we have illustrations of civility and civil discourse. I think that it looks like Scalia and Ginsburg. It looks like Michelle Obama and George W. Bush. It looks like the way Charlie led us so steadily and respectfully through all of the passionate discussions this last year. It looks like the way Trey leads us, continues to be respectful and passionate about every single member of our state bar. If you haven't looked at the TYLA website in a while, I highly encourage you to do that. We have a wellness hub that was created under Victor Flores' presidency and walked hand-in-hand with TLAP. We are taking that model and creating a civility hub where we will include interviews, videos, resources on how we can continue to be more civil to each other. On top of that, with a generous grant from the Texas Bar Foundation, we're going to start early, teaching civil discourse, teaching civility to all grades of school children, K through 12. And we know that this is important because there are teachers out there, including my mom, who tell us it is so important to have these discussions and to try and involve our students. But there's nothing in the curriculum that tells you how to do that. There's nothing in the curriculum that tells you how to have a hard discussion. The thing that

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has resonated with me so much in reading as much as I can about civil discourse, to remember - and I think this is particularly hard for us as attorneys - civil discourse is not about trying to convince someone of anything. Civil discourse is about listening to each other. It is about being respectful to each other. And the goal is to walk away feeling like you understand that person and their views more. One of the other things that we're going to focus on is relational wellness. Relationships are hard - relationships with our colleagues, relationships with our spouses, relationships with people we are on committees with. That is something that we have to continue to work on. It is work. But it is so worth it. Stay tuned. We have a lot of really wonderful projects this year. I am so proud to be serving with Michael and Britney. And I cannot wait to show you what our amazing board does. Thank you.

: (APPLAUSE)

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you so much, Jeanine. It's always so inspiring to hear about all of the great work that TYLA does. And I just urge you to keep up the great efforts. Next, I'd ask Trish McAllister to come forward and speak to us about the Texas Access to Justice Commission.

TRISH MCALLISTER: Thank you so much. Well, it's been a while since I've given a report. And I will say that it has, as everyone has experienced themselves, been an incredibly busy, busy, busy, busy, busy time for access to justice in the state of Texas. And, of course, the pandemic, we responded as - you know, as it was - as if we were conducting a disaster like we do with any hurricane or anything like that. But this was sort of a whole different level because, normally, when there's a disaster in the state, it's localized, and we're able to garner resources and help from all over the state and all over the country, frankly, especially with Hurricane Harvey. But because the entire nation and the entire state was experiencing the same thing, it became a lot more difficult to - with the number of resources that we had. So it was a very challenging time. There was a lot of moving parts. We expanded our disaster response. Typically, we have, you know, kind of like a core group of 10 people working on it, but we expanded it to 35. And then, of course, we got the double whammy with Winter Storm Uri. So for legal aid, it was a very challenging time. But at the same time, as all times of trouble, there was a lot of beauty in it, too, in that relationships between providers became stronger, and that meant more collaboration. And lots of things always come - good things come out of collaboration. So I think the next few years will be a really interesting time for legal aid. And I know that there's a lot of positive things that are happening because of the pandemic and the things that were challenging. Of course, the other thing that everybody experienced was virtual hearings. And for the commission particularly, we were asked by OCA and the court to really help bring some of those things online, especially for people who do not have the luxury of having a lawyer which is most people who are going to court for most basic needs like housing and family matters and things like that. So we developed best practices for judges on things to consider when they had a self-represented litigant in front of them, including disability access issues and language access issues. We also created lots of materials for people who don't have a lawyer so that they could understand what was going on, what to look for in citations and notices of hearings. I mean, you know, those first few things - people were being told to still go to the courthouse. So there was a lot of just chaos initially. And one thing that I will say because I know that there is a lot of different emotions around virtual hearings for lawyers - but for people who are representing themselves, it has been a huge boon to them. There has been more participation by self-represented litigants than ever in the past. So virtual hearings is a pretty big access to justice issue. They - we saw default rates go down in JP courts on lots of different things. So it is a pretty significant access to justice issue. Although I will tell you, myself personally, when I first, you know, got involved in the virtual hearings when they were first coming online, there were so many challenges that needed to be overcome that I was really uncertain about it all. But with the data and the statistics just right there in front of me, you know, I had to take a

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second look about it. We - also, the Supreme Court has come out with a few new rules that impact access to justice. As many of you know, the commission has been highly involved with Rule 145 which is governed statements of inability to afford payment of costs, court costs. And since my short time - I've been here 10 years - in the commission, this will be the second revision to it. And we were really, really, really pleased with the way that that was changed, and we had a few minor comments. We sent those in. As many as you all know, the discovery rules also changed. And we made some comments specific to self-represented litigants and some of the challenges that the changes proposed to them. Of course, we would love it if everybody got a lawyer. I don't know if it's actually physically even possible given the size of our state and that we're, like, second in our poverty level. Another really great piece of news is that federal funding for Legal Aid - that's through the distribution that the legal services corporation gets - is the highest it's ever been. It's 465 million. So that's 25 million more than it was last year. And Texas gets about 37 million of that. It's all based on how many people - how many low-income people your state has. And then, because of COVID and the pandemic with all the newly poor people who've lost their jobs and things like that, apparently, the request from LSE is going to be over a billion dollars. I think it's in President Biden's budget for about 600 million. Another kind of incredible piece of news is that our state funding levels remain the same which is amazing considering our - this session was very fast-paced. There was a lot of competing interests. There was a lot of need for money to be spent in various places because of the - you know, the pandemic hitting the state so hard, the nation so hard. But we were able to keep level funding. We even got an additional 2.5 million because of the number of people who are applying for services through Legal Aid because they're newly poor. We also - thanks to every single one of you and all of your colleagues, we, as you may know, because we're - you may have seen some recent things, but the Justice for All Campaign is our way of trying to ask for you to support Legal Aid. And last year was the - that y'all contributed more than you've ever contributed in the past at \$1.4 million. And I have to say, when I got here in 2011, that raised about \$600,000. So we are now at \$1.4 million, and all those - all that goes straight to Legal Aid. On the horizon, we're getting ready to have our annual Poverty Law Conference and Pro Bono Coordinators Retreat. This is the Legal Access division of the state bar. I've had that as well. So we're very excited. That typically has about 500 to 700 people who come. And I know everybody's really eager to get back to seeing people in person and learning together and doing good work. So thank you for your time. I appreciate all that you do for access to justice.

: (APPLAUSE)

SANTOS VARGAS: Thank you very much, Trish.

CHARLIE GINN: I was just saying that, yeah. OK. Absolutely. If you're a new member on the nominations and elections committee - so check your assignments - we need you to stick around after the meeting. Thanks, Santos. Sorry.

SANTOS VARGAS: And that meeting starts at 11:00 a.m.

CHARLIE GINN: I think it starts right...

SANTOS VARGAS: Oh, right after the meeting - OK. Thank you very much, Charlie. Before we adjourn, we're going to continue the tradition of reciting the state bar mission statement if we can get it on the screen. All right. So if everybody could stand up. The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, educate the public about the rule of law and promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of

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law. And with that, everyone, the June 17, 2021, meeting of the state bar board of directors is adjourned. Thank you so much, everyone.

: (APPLAUSE)