

# State Bar of Texas Proposed Task Force on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion July 2020

## Purpose

Study and propose actions to be taken by the State Bar of Texas to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the administration of justice and the practice of law.

## Discussion

The State Bar has a longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The State Bar's Office of Minority Affairs implements and carries out initiatives to further the Bar's commitment to respond to historical discrimination on the basis of race, sex, and sexual orientation, to improve career opportunities for *all* lawyers and improve the quality of legal services in Texas. Any Texas attorney interested in furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion is welcome and encouraged to participate in the program, which also works to foster allies of underrepresented groups.

In March of 2006, State Bar Presidents Eduardo Rodriguez and Martha Dickie requested the creation of a Task Force to study and make recommendations to the State Bar of Texas for actions to be taken to improve the hiring, retention, and promotion of minority and women attorneys in large and mid-size law firms and corporations in the State of Texas. The task force produced a report with numerous recommendations including the expansion of the State Bar Mission Statement to include: "*encourage diversity among the participants in the administration of justice and the practice of law in Texas.*" Subsequently, the mission statement was amended to add: "**to promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.**"

In subsequent years the State Bar has undertaken many of the projects identified by the 2006 task force and set forth in the report dated January 4, 2007 (attached to this request). It is time to provide a fresh look and a status report regarding the initiatives previously recommended and to create a new plan of action. President-Elect Sylvia Borunda Firth has committed to adopting some of the recommendations as her presidential initiatives for 2021 - 2022.

## Fiscal Impact

- The task force will consist of 15 members
- It is anticipated the task force will meet mostly by teleconference and videoconference but may meet in person

Based on these considerations, the fiscal impact of the task force is estimated to be \$2,500. The creation of the task force is not anticipated to have a significant fiscal impact on the FY 2020 -2021 general fund budget

### **Task Force Members**

The task force members will include representatives from the following sections and standing committees of the Bar:

- African American Lawyers Section
- Asian-Pacific Interest Section
- Hispanic Issues Section
- LGBT Law Section
- Native American Law Section
- Women in the Law Section
- Disability Issues Committee
- Diversity in the Profession Committee
- Women in the Profession Committee

TYLA will also have a representative on the task force.

The remaining 5 members will be nominated by President-Elect Sylvia Borunda Firth to allow for representation from the Jewish and Muslim legal communities and other lawyers who are not necessarily currently involved in State Bar Sections, but who are members of a group that is an underrepresented in State Bar leadership and have expressed an interest in participating in the task force.

Participants will include members of historically underrepresented communities, and allies of those groups.

The roster for proposed members will be presented to the Board for approval at the September quarterly meeting.

### **Initial Assignments**

The initial assignments for the task force will include:

- Review the 2007 Taskforce Report and determine which of the action items recommended and not completed should be advanced for further consideration
- Review proposals submitted by members as proposed action items in advance of the July 27<sup>th</sup> State Bar Board Meeting
- Review ideas for presidential initiatives for 2021-2022
- Consider proposed revisions to the Texas Lawyer's Creed
- Consider and suggest updates to the Office of Minority Affairs and its offerings
  
- Review the mission and current configuration of the Diversity in the Profession Standing Committee

- Make recommendations for mandatory training for officers and directors to foster an environment of cultural sensitivity and inclusion
- Discuss ways to create a pipeline to increase participation in SBOT leadership by minority members of the Bar
- Consider other matters selected by a majority of the members of the task force

### **Written Report**

The task force will prepare a written report to include: 1. an analysis of work which has been done as a result of the 2007 report; 2. recommendations for completion of remaining work from the 2007 report; 3. New recommendations from the task force **to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the administration of justice and the practice of law.**