

# RAISING THE BAR

NORTHEAST HARRIS COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION (NEHCBA)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Elizabeth S. Pagel

As attorneys, we all have a responsibility to contribute to our communities. The "Texas Lawyers Creed: A Mandate for Professionalism" states in the very first section that as an attorney, "I am responsible to assure that all persons have access to competent representation

regardless of wealth or position in life. I commit myself to an adequate and effective pro bono program."

We are all busy. Those of us who are solo practitioners or members of small firms may not feel we have the resources to take on any more clients, particularly clients for whom we will not be paid. We have our own bills to pay, expenses to cover, employees who are depending on us to meet payroll. But look at the title of the Texas Lawyers Creed: it is a mandate for professionalism. Not a mere suggestion, but something we are expected to comply with.

I strongly recommend that each member of our bar have, at all times, at least one client being represented by you on a pro bono basis. The best way to find such clients, in my opinion, is to sign up with the Houston Volunteer Lawyers ([www.makejusticehappen.org](http://www.makejusticehappen.org)).

"I AM RESPONSIBLE TO ASSURE THAT ALL PERSONS HAVE ACCESS TO COMPETENT REPRESENTATION..."

Here are some advantages:

1. They always have a backlog of cases, people needing help. You will absolutely, guaranteed, be able to find someone for whom you will make a difference.
2. You can use an HVL case to broaden your areas of expertise. If you are not familiar with the area of law involved, HVL will assign a mentor to guide you through the process.
3. HVL has staff attorneys who are available to answer questions.
4. HVL pre-screens clients to ensure that they qualify for pro bono representation.

## NEHCBA BOARD

*President:* Elizabeth Pagel  
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*President-Elect:* Benjamin Sanchez  
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*Immediate Past President:* Patricia Billings  
[patricia@lawyerbillings.com](mailto:patricia@lawyerbillings.com)

*Secretary:* Marta Marin  
[mmartin@cwmpk.com](mailto:mmartin@cwmpk.com)

*Treasurer:* Kristi Burleigh  
[kburleigh@cwmpk.com](mailto:kburleigh@cwmpk.com)

*Social Chair:* Chris Forbes  
[cforbeslaw@gmail.com](mailto:cforbeslaw@gmail.com)

*CLE Chair:* Florita Welsh  
[fwelsh@welsh-lawfirm.com](mailto:fwelsh@welsh-lawfirm.com)

## CALENDAR EVENTS

April 13, 2018  
Monthly Luncheon at Los Cucos

*Speaker:* Maria Lowry  
DWI's and Family Law Cases

April 18, 2018:  
Happy Hour at Amadeo's

May 11, 2018:  
Monthly Luncheon at Los Cucos

Election of 2018/2019 Board of Directors

*Speaker:* Traci Ahart  
Do's and Don'ts of Mediation

May 16, 2018  
Happy Hour at Amadeo's

5. While working on a case through HVL, you will be covered under HVL's malpractice insurance.

6. HVL clients are, in my experience, extremely grateful for the help you give them. I have had HVL clients bake me cookies, crochet dresser scarves, write me effusive "thank you" notes, etc. This is definitely a "feel good" experience.

Still don't feel able to take on a pro bono client? No problem! HVL also holds legal clinics in various areas of the city on a regular basis. Give up a couple of hours on a Saturday to help out!

Of course, there are many other ways to volunteer in the community. If HVL turns out to not be right for you, contact the Houston Bar Association. They

also hold legal clinics, "Will-A-Thons," and other events. Twice a month they need volunteer attorneys to answer telephones for their "Legal Lines" program, and always have "experts" to help you answer questions in unfamiliar areas of the law.

Let's all "pay it forward" in whatever way we can. I promise, you'll be glad you did.

## ELECTIONS

### NEHCBA Board Members

We will soon be holding elections for next year's board members. Benjamin Sanchez will move from President-Elect to President, and Liza Pagel will step down from President to Past President. All other positions are open! We need:

- *President-Elect* – to serve one year as president elect, one year as president, and one year as Immediate Past President.
- *Secretary* – to keep our records.
- *Treasurer* – to monitor expenditures.
- *Social Chair* – to plan social events.

If you are interested in filling any of these positions, please contact a member of the current board.

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## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

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We know that your time is valuable; therefore, the Northeast Harris County Bar Association (NEHCBA) wants to ensure that your participation and involvement has multiple benefits. From networking to CLE opportunities, NEHCBA provides a local nexus for you to grow professionally and provides a colleague support system in our area. For example, NEHCBA provides every member an opportunity to showcase their knowledge in our quarterly newsletter. But most importantly, we hope that NEHCBA fosters a sense of community for mentorship, personal growth, referrals as well as friendships. Practicing law is a challenging endeavor. Whether you are a solo attorney, or you are affiliated with a firm, having a strong and available community of lawyers from all areas of practice of law is an important component to your success. We hope that our local bar association will make the practice of law easier and more enjoyable. Don't hesitate to reach out to your Board Members if you have any questions or if you need some help!

*Patricia Billings, Immediate Past President*