

# RAISING THE BAR

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## Current Community

### Service Project

The NEHCBA has committed to assist HAMM on **April 8th**. We will be stocking and organizing the pantry from **9:00 am to Noon**. If you would like to help...just show up at 1302 First Street, Humble, Texas 77338.

If you are interested in writing an article for our quarterly newsletter blog, please email [mlanier@cwmpk.com](mailto:mlanier@cwmpk.com)



Patricia Billings,  
2016-2017 NEHCBA



## K-I-S-S by David Chilek

The “KISS” principle was popularized in the mid 1900’s but was based upon theories asserted by Albert Einstein and other great thinkers throughout history. The “KISS” principle is the theory that systems perform best when they are simple rather than complex. Similar theories have been used for centuries in the field of science which like the practice of law, is based on theory and practice. I believe the “KISS” principle can be applied to the practice of law by breaking down complex issues into a more simplistic and concise writing style.

As attorneys, we have a tendency to get a bit wordy and that can negatively impact the reader’s comprehension of our message. Before I started law school I had a preconceived notion that attorneys are required to write in arcane sentences and use legalese as a

## President’s Message

As President of the Northeast Harris County Bar Association, I wish to extend a warm welcome to our members and attorneys in the area! We know that your time is valuable, therefore, 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!

badge of honor, signifying their passage of the bar. It wasn’t until I actually began practicing law that I realized this is the exact opposite of what an attorney should do. Attorneys need to be experts in the art of persuasive writing. We should tailor our message to the reader more than in any other writing style because the reader (i.e. the judge) holds your client’s fate in her hands. Making the judge’s job more difficult or taxing is not a good practice.

I believe one major impediment to simple and concise legal writing is changing the mindset of the practicing attorney. As attorneys we often deal with case law from a distant time period and complex legislation that is the product of group think from an ensemble of attorneys. The legal practice is always evolving and legal writing should follow suit, pardon the pun. Archaic words and phrases such as “heretofore” or “hereinafter” still serve a purpose in legal writing, but over

use of such phrases can confuse the reader and interrupt flow. I’m not advocating dumbing down your writing when there are no artful terms or legal phrases, but rather streamline your writing. If one word will suffice where you have three, use the former. If you can convey your legal argument in a couple of paragraphs as opposed to a couple of pages, use the shorter of the two.

A lawyer’s level of confidence can also prevent simplistic and concise writing. The use of legalese, when it is not necessary, and wordy sentence structure is often times used as a shield by the drafting attorney, believing it will prevent the reader from ascertaining the writer’s true knowledge of the subject. That same writing style is also been used in an attempt to detract the reader’s attention from the bad facts in the attorney’s case. However, the effect of that convoluted and

outdated writing style often frustrates the reader and ultimately draws more attention to the information the attorney is trying to minimize.

In sum, judges are smart. Attorneys are smart (for the most part). The bad facts in your case are more than likely going to manifest themselves regardless of your attempts to write around them. It is a better practice to present the facts of your case concisely and garner the trust of the reader, which in turn, will bolster your credibility with the reader. The bottom line is judges and attorneys are busy individuals. If you can convey your message in three (3) pages and opposing counsel takes six (6), whose document do you think the judge is more likely to read first? Keep it simple.

### Upcoming Speakers

#### Mark Your Calendars

#### March 10, 2017

Mr. Benjamin Sanchez will be discussing "Residential Evictions in Texas".

#### April 14, 2017—TBA

## Upcoming Events

The NEHCBA offers eleven CLE Luncheons per year at Los Cucos Mexican Cafe, 23730 US Hwy 59, Kingwood, Texas 77339. The lunch meetings are held the 2nd Friday of every month with the exception of December.

Members—\$25.00

Non-members—\$35.00

Annual Membership Dues—\$50.00

**Dues can be mailed to:** Kristi Burleigh at CWMPK, 800 Rockmead, Ste. 220, Kingwood, TX 77339

**HAPPY HOUR** - At 5:30 every Wednesday following the Friday luncheon is the monthly happy hour held at Amadeos on Loop 494 in Kingwood.

**CRAWFISH BOIL** to be held on Saturday, March 25, 2017 at Noon at the Law Office of Patricia Billings, 407 E. Main St., Humble, TX. RSVP to [mmartin@cwmpk.com](mailto:mmartin@cwmpk.com) no later than March 18. Visit our Facebook page or [www.nehcba.org](http://www.nehcba.org) for more information.

## Photos from our 2017 Christmas Party

