



## A Farewell Message From The Texas Municipal Courts Association President

August 15, 2022

Dear TMCA member,

Good afternoon. The Board of Directors approved some policy changes that will take effect on September 1, 2022. Among the changes approved:

- 1) As stated in my April 13, 2022 message to you, the TMCA Board of Directors voted to approve a net increase in the registration fees for TMCEC classes. The new registration fee consists of two components: a \$75 registration fee and a voluntary \$75 overhead fee for a total of \$150.
- 2) An amended vendor policy will require vendors to pay a \$500 table fee for TMCEC events. In exchange for the fee, they will get a list of attendees containing the names, offices held and the cities they represent. Anyone can opt out of disclosure if they check a box on their electronic profile with TMCEC stated they do not want that information disclosed. You will receive a request by TMCEC to update your profile very soon. **Make sure you elect not to disclose your information on your profile if you do not want it on the distribution list.**
- 3) Membership certificates and cards will be sent to you electronically this term.

While the registration fee has limitations imposed by the grant from the Court of Criminal Appeals, the overhead and vendors fees will be used to supplement the registration fee for items such as coffee breaks, meals, hotels rooms at seminars, and other items not covered by the grant. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other events, the prices of these and similar items have risen higher and faster than the grant can address. The Board of Directors did not want to deprive seminar attendees of any aspect of their usual positive experience while receiving TMCEC's excellent product. The Board thought these fees were necessary to preserve TMCEC's ability to deliver a superlative experience for all municipal court personnel.

The civil rules workgroup established by Chief Justice Hecht's office distributed proposed civil rules applicable to municipal courts to municipal judges, city attorneys, TML and the TMCA Board of Directors on June 21st. Recipients had 30 days to respond. The workgroup met on July 22<sup>nd</sup> to consider any feedback and made a few changes to the proposed rules. The workgroup will meet on August 22<sup>nd</sup> to finalize the language of the proposed rules, an executive summary and any commentary which will be submitted to the Supreme Court Advisory Rules Committee. My goal with this project has always been to protect us from the full implementation of the civil rules of procedure because we do not have the required infrastructure and to provide maximum flexibility for municipal judges.

We are losing three board members this term: Immediate past President Judge Pam Liston, Region 4 Director Judge Forrest Phifer, and Treasurer Bob Richter. Judge Pamela Liston left the board earlier this year. We thank her for her service to TMCA and for her leadership. Judge Forrest Phifer who has served as Region 4 Director is leaving the board at the end of the term due to term limits. We thank him for his dedication to TMCA/TMCEC, years of service, and for his thoughtful contributions over many meetings.

Judge Bob Richter is stepping down as Treasurer at the end of this term. Judge Richter has served on the Board of Directors as Treasurer for over forty years. He has been a member of the TMCA since the 70's. He joined the board when TMCA President Elinor Walters (Municipal Judge of Seabrook) asked him to serve as Treasurer in the late 70's or early 80's. Judge Richter has served as Treasurer ever since. He has been there for virtually every major development and accomplishment of TMCA. To consider Bob's history with TMCA is to contemplate the history of the organization itself.

Due to the length of his tenure for which there is no precedent, Judge Richter was honored with the first TMCA Distinguished Service Award expressing gratitude for over 40 years of leadership, contributions, dedication, commitment, loyalty, and outstanding service to TMCA. We wish Judge Richter the best in his future endeavors.

I also want to acknowledge the passing of Judge Robert Kubena of Hallettsville last month. Judge Kubena served as a municipal judge for 52 years and was a founder of TMCA/TMCEC. All of us who work in the municipal court world are beneficiaries of his vision and actions.

TMCA conducted its first electronic candidate election this year. While we were excited by the prospect of giving more members the opportunity to vote easily, the rate of participation in the candidate election was lower than expected. We plan to engage in an education campaign next term to inform members at every TMCEC and TMCA event that candidate elections will be held electronically.

We will have three new board members this year. Judge Brain Holman from Lewisville will serve as President-elect. Sheila Seymore from Canyon will serve as Treasurer. Hon. April Earley from Tyler will serve as Region 4 Director. Congratulations to all the election winners!

Our website address is [www.txmca.com](http://www.txmca.com). The TMCA website now includes a candidate elections page and a history page on the website listing TMCA presidents with the dates of their terms and the cities they represented. We also include presidents for whom we do not have dates of their terms or cities. I encourage you to look at our website. If you have any information regarding those presidents, please contact us to share that information.

TMCA held its first in-person annual conference in two years in Fredericksburg last week. I thank Annual Conference Committee Chair Judge Bonnie Townsend and committee members Landra Solansky, Tammy Odom, Hilda Cuthbertson, and Shona Bohon for arranging our successful conference this year. It is a tremendous undertaking to find and negotiate with the hotels, speakers, vendors, members, organize the schedule, get the word out to everyone, and deal with all of the logistics. Congratulations to all of the award winners!

I congratulate Executive Director Ryan Turner for the exemplary leadership he has shown this term at TMCEC. Ryan has faced some challenges since he became the executive director, and he has handled them well this term. I appreciate his regular communications with me and the teamwork he exhibited. I also want to commend the service and dedication shown by all 17 TMCEC personnel this term.

I thank all of the members of the Board of Directors for their teamwork and dedication to TMCA/TMCEC. I convey special thanks to members of the Executive Committee, the committee chairs and to Shona Bohon, our TMCA coordinator. Everything we accomplished this term was definitely a team effort. I was very fortunate this term to work with such an intelligent, talented, and devoted group of extraordinary individuals.

Now let's get behind and support Judge Gary Ellsworth from Spearman as President next term!

It has been an honor to serve as your President.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and thank you for being a TMCA member,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, sweeping strokes that form a cursive name.

President,  
Texas Municipal Courts Association