



The Texas Docket

www.texasalp.org

June 2026
Volume 24, Issue 1



*Congratulations
2026-2027 Texas ALP
Executive Committee*

Editor

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The Texas Docket

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A Message from our 2026-2027 Texas ALP's President

Dear TALP Members,

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as your newly elected President of the Texas Association for Legal Professionals. I am truly grateful for the trust you have placed in me, and I look forward to the work we will accomplish together in the coming year.

Our theme for this year, *"It Only Takes a Spark,"* reflects the belief that even the smallest idea, action, or moment of inspiration can ignite meaningful change. Each of you is that spark—bringing energy, talent, and dedication to our organization. Together, those sparks can grow into something powerful, strengthening our chapters and elevating TALP as a whole.

As we move forward, my goals are centered on connection, growth, and engagement. I encourage every member to become more involved—whether by attending meetings, participating in events, stepping into leadership roles, or simply reaching out to fellow members. By fostering stronger engagement within our chapters, we can build a more vibrant and supportive community across the entire organization.

We also have an opportunity to focus on growth—both individually and collectively. Strengthening our existing chapters while exploring ways to expand our reach will ensure that TALP continues to thrive and remain relevant in an ever-evolving legal profession. Your ideas, enthusiasm, and participation will be key to making this vision a reality.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to each of you for your continued support and patience as we navigate changes within our organization. Change can bring challenges, but it also brings opportunity—and with your commitment, I am confident we will emerge stronger, more unified, and better positioned for the future.

Let us embrace this year with purpose and optimism. Remember, it only takes a spark to begin something extraordinary. I encourage each of you to find your spark and share it with TALP.

Thank you for being an essential part of this organization.

With appreciation and enthusiasm,

Emily Folsom

President Texas Association of Legal Professionals (TALP)



A Message from our 2025-2026 Texas ALP's President

Greetings Texas Association of Legal Professionals:

Wow, it is hard to believe that I started this journey as Texas Association of Legal Professionals' (Texas ALP) President four years ago. Time flies when you are learning and having fun with Texas ALP! It has been an honor, and I am grateful to have served as your 2025-2026 Texas ALP President.

Over the last 35 years, each of you has been and will continue to be a vital part of my path in becoming a legal professional. I am proud to be part of a Tri-level Association in which our members follow a Code of Ethics for the law and have respect for others. *As Henry van Dyke stated, "Some succeed because they are destined to, but most succeed because they are determined to."* We succeeded because we worked Hand in Hand as One to make Texas ALP known across our NALS family and in our legal communities by providing leadership, legal education, professional development, and much more. The Executive Committee could not have done the work without you, our members. Each of you are true reflections of our past, present, and future leaders of our association. "Thank You" and "Gracias" for your time, talent, and treasure and for saying "Yes" to Texas ALP.

With Love and Gratitude,

Theresa Ann

Theresa Ann Alba, CLP
2025-2026 President



**REMEMBER,
HAND IN HAND WE ARE ONE!**



CONGRATULATIONS
BEATRICE DUENEZ
2026 LEGAL PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

The 2026 Legal Professional of the Year is BEATRICE DUENEZ! According to her employer, Keil Swan, General Counsel of Lubbock Power and Light Company, Beatrice shows intuitive understanding of legal issues. She utilizes excellent logic and reasoning skills to resolve problems within the legal department. Beatrice proactively tackles problems and works toward resolution. She tirelessly takes on new tasks at work and continuously takes new opportunities to deepen her legal expertise.

Beatrice also goes above and beyond to contribute to her community through her involvement with South Plains Food Bank, Lubbock Impact, and United We Read.

Beatrice joined the National Association for Legal Professionals as a student in the Legal Studies Program with South Plains College in 2018. After graduation, she joined Lubbock Legal Professional Association and our tri-level organization in March 2024. She is the President-Elect for Lubbock LPA for 2025-2026.

Beatrice stated in her application for LPY that she loves being part of a profession where organization, service, and community impact come together every day.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BEATRICE DUENEZ, Texas ALP's 2026 Legal Professional of the Year!





THE PRESIDENT'S TEXAS STAR AWARDS

The Texas Star Awards were a surprise to all. President Alba handed out these awards at the Presidents' Banquet to the following Texas ALP Chairs during the 2025-2026 fiscal year in appreciation for their outstanding contribution to Texas ALP.



This member for the last number of years has walked Hand in Hand as One to keep our members well informed about legal issues and how our members give back to their legal communities in Texas. She is always willing to go above and beyond to make sure the job gets done professionally and in a timely manner! Thank you for sharing your time, talent and treasures and for walking Hand in Hand as One. **LOLA J. SMITH-GENTRY, ACP** you are a **Texas ALP Texas Star!**



This member for many years has said YES and continues to say YES before knowing what she is getting herself into! She is a good listener, shares ideas and is respectful of the outcome when sharing her thoughts. She gives 100% to our tri-level association and walks Hand in Hand with our members to make Texas ALP shine like a Super Star on all matters. Thank you for walking Hand in Hand as One. **HELENE L. WOOD, PP, PLS, TSC-RE** you are a **Texas ALP Texas Star!**



This member decided to take the challenge and walked Hand in Hand along the side of others as a Committee Chair. I'm extremely proud for her hard work! From the day she said YES, she sought out officers and members throughout our tri-level association to obtain the knowledge needed to make sure she got the job done right! Thank you for saying yes and for walking Hand in Hand as One. **LAURA L. ROGERS, PLS** you are a **Texas ALP Texas Star!**





Join our social media community today!

- <https://www.TexasALP.org>
- <https://www.facebook.com/texasalp>
- <https://www.instagram.com/texasalp/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/texasalp>

The advantages of social media include networking opportunities for members, increased communication and member engagement through event promotions and updates, and a powerful platform for professional development.

Chapter Event Promotion:

If you want to create and share content that showcases your chapter and promotes any upcoming events, share photos from past events and important announcements, or share relevant articles, please send a request to the txalp.media@gmail.com account with all the information and the marketing team will share the content across our social media accounts.

We are always looking for ideas on how to reach more members and prospective members through our social media accounts. If you have any ideas or requests, please let us know.

Let's stay connected!

Let's Get Social!

The *Texas Association of Legal Professionals*
would Love to Connect with You!



HAND IN HAND WE ARE ONE!

**EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2026
NEW NOTARY PUBLIC RULES**

The following information was provided by:

Sheana McKenzie
Deputy Director, Government Filings Division
Office of the Texas Secretary of State

The Texas Secretary of State's website does include an announcement regarding SB 693. Please see the information below for details about the bill.

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/statdoc/notary-public.shtml>

Texas Senate Bill 693 (89th Legislature), effective September 1, 2025, significantly reforms notary public regulations, introducing mandatory training for applicants, strengthening penalties for failures in signer identification, and requiring a 10-year record retention period. It aims to reduce fraudulent notarizations.

Key Provisions of SB 693:

Mandatory Education: Applicants and those seeking reappointment must complete education requirements set by the Secretary of State, which are to be offered exclusively by the Secretary of State.

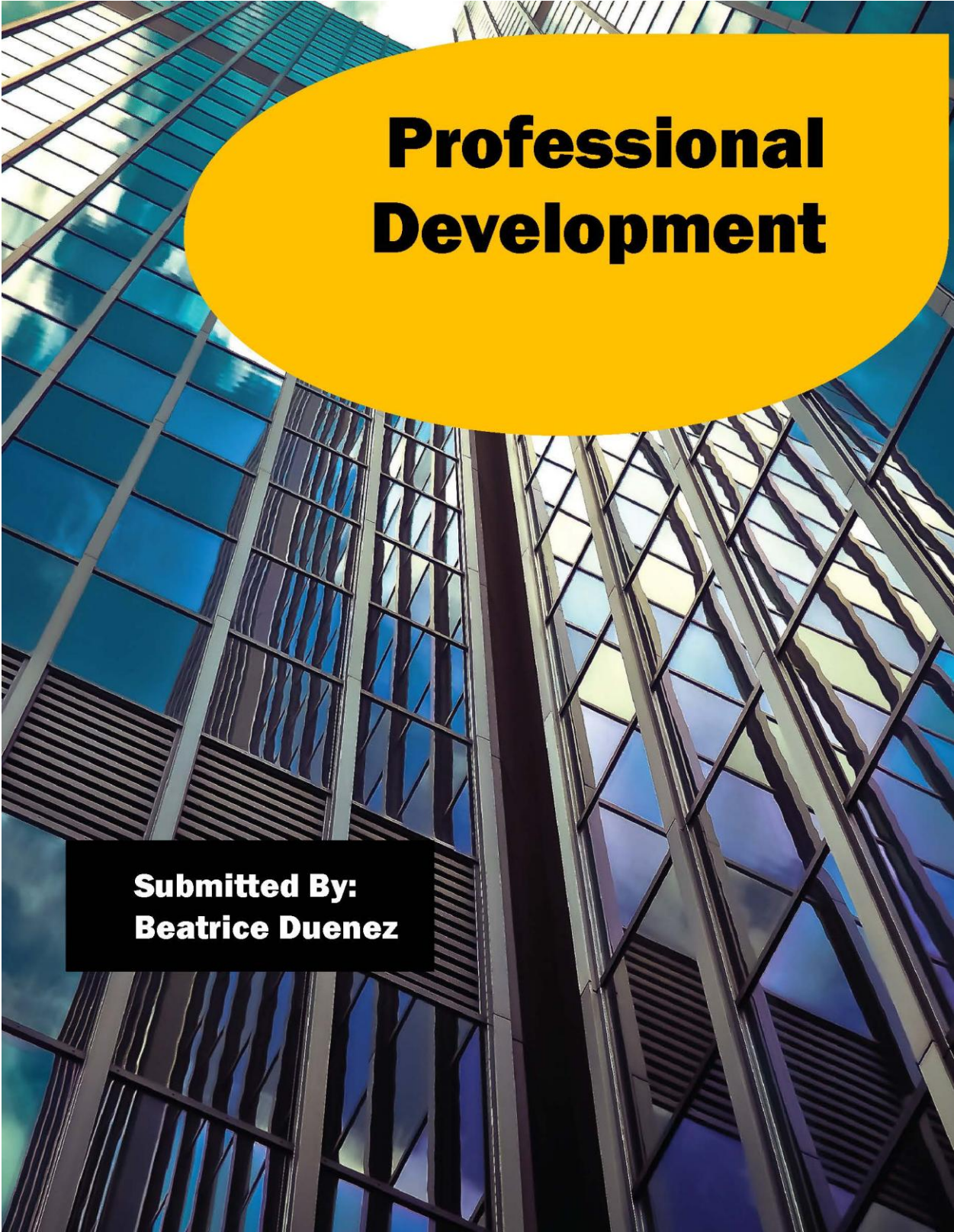
Stricter Penalties: A new criminal offense is created for knowingly failing to require a signer's personal appearance, which is classified as a Class A misdemeanor, or a state jail felony if the document involves real property.

Record Retention: Notaries are required to maintain records for 10 years.

Implementation: The Secretary of State is required to adopt rules by January 1, 2026, to implement these changes.

This legislation increases the professional standards and accountability for notaries public in Texas.

At the February 25 TALP noon webinar, Sheana McKenzie and Elizabeth Sherwood spoke on the new rules pertaining to notary publics in Texas.



Professional Development

**Submitted By:
Beatrice Duenez**

Legal Professional Development for Paralegals & Legal Staff



Strengthen Your Core Legal Skills

Strong fundamentals create trust and open doors. Focus on sharpening legal research, drafting, cite-checking, filing procedures, and case management. Accuracy and consistency make a noticeable impact.

Organization Is Your Superpower

Calendars, deadlines, discovery, and filings depend on strong systems. Well-organized legal professionals reduce risk, improve efficiency, and become indispensable to their teams.

Communication Sets You Apart

Clear emails, concise documents, and proactive updates prevent mistakes and reduce stress. Anticipating needs and communicating early demonstrates professionalism and reliability.

Embrace Legal Technology

From e-filing systems and document management software to AI research tools, legal technology saves time and improves accuracy. Learning these tools positions you as a problem solver and resource within your office.

Seek Growth Opportunities

Volunteer for new matters, attend trainings, and assist with special projects. Each opportunity expands your skill set and increases your value.

Make Development Enjoyable

Podcasts, CLEs, conferences, and learning alongside colleagues make professional growth engaging and sustainable.

Final Thought:

Professional development is a marathon, not a sprint. Small, consistent efforts lead to meaningful career advancement. Invest in yourself—your role truly matters.

Paralegal & Legal Staff Professional Development Checklist

(Print-Friendly / One-Page)

Core Legal Skills

- ☐ Update legal research and citation skills
- ☐ Improve drafting and proofreading accuracy
- ☐ Review filing requirements and court procedures

Organization & Deadlines

- ☐ Maintain organized digital and physical case files
- ☐ Track deadlines and calendar critical dates
- ☐ Create or refine task-tracking systems

Technology & Efficiency

- ☐ Learn one new legal technology tool
- ☐ Improve document management system proficiency
- ☐ Use templates to reduce errors and save time

Professional Growth

- ☐ Attend a CLE or professional training
- ☐ Seek feedback from an attorney or supervisor
- ☐ Network with another legal professional

Career Goals

- ☐ Set one short-term career goal
- ☐ Set one long-term career goal
- ☐ Review progress quarterly

Tip: Print this checklist and revisit it every quarter to track your growth and celebrate progress.

This article is based on generally accepted professional development standards and best practices recognized by the American Bar Association (ABA), the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), and the National Association for Legal Support Professionals (NALS), as well as guidance from legal research and practice management organizations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Lola J. Smith-Gentry, ACP

Setting Boundaries



Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know Your Boundaries

Boundaries should be based on your values, or the things that are important to you. For example, if you value spending time with family, set firm boundaries about working late.

Your boundaries are yours, and yours alone. Many of your boundaries might align with those who are close to you, but others will be unique.

Know your boundaries *before* entering a situation. This will make it less likely you’ll do something you’re not comfortable with.

What to Say

You always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt about what you want.

“I’m not comfortable with this”

“Please don’t do that”

“Not at this time”

“I can’t do that for you”

“This doesn’t work for me”

“I’ve decided not to”

“This is not acceptable”

“I’m drawing the line at ____”

“I don’t want to do that”

What to Do

Use Confident Body Language

Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).

Be Respectful

Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It’s okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.

Plan Ahead

Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Compromise

When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never *have* to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

Setting Boundaries

Instructions: Respond to the following practice questions as if you were really in each situation. Think about the language *you* would use to firmly state your boundary.

✓ Examples

Situation: You notice your roommate has been eating your food in the fridge. You never discussed plans to share food, and don't want them eating what you bought.

Response: "I'd like to keep our food separate. If there's something of mine that you want, please ask me before taking it."

Situation: Your friend calls you at 11 pm to discuss issues she is having with her boyfriend. You need to wake up at 6 am.

Response: "I can tell you're upset. I want to talk to you, but I need to go to bed. Maybe we can talk tomorrow afternoon."

🎯 Practice

Situation: You invited a friend over for the evening, but now it's getting late. You would like to get ready for bed, but your friend seems unaware of how late it is.

Response:

Situation: A good friend asks you out on a date. You are not interested in being more than friends. You would like to let them down clearly, but gently.

Response:

Setting Boundaries

Situation: You missed several days of work due to a medical condition. When you get back, a coworker asks what happened. You feel this information is personal, and do not want to share.

Response:

Situation: Your brother asks if you can watch his two young children on Saturday morning. You already have plans.

Response:

Situation: Your coworker is upset about their recent performance review. They start yelling and slamming their fist on their desk. This is making you very uncomfortable.

Response:

Situation: A salesperson comes to your door during dinner. You try to politely show disinterest, but they keep giving their sales pitch. You want to get back to dinner.

Response:

It Only Takes a Spark

Chapters—

When sharing our chapter educational opportunities with the members,
we connect to and are one with them.

Please send information to me about your chapter's educational opportunities
(in person or virtual; special or monthly) so it can be shared with our members.

For events the following month, please send to me by the third Monday of the prior month
so the information can be distributed on the last Monday of the prior month.

Marty S. Olson, PP, PLS, TSC-RE
Texas ALP Education Chair
molson@craincaton.com

TALP HUGS

I am serving as chair of the TALP Hugs for the first time this year. Through TALP Hugs, we share information among the distribution list members about others who may need a card, a phone call, or other special attention. It may be that they are going through an illness or a death in the family or it could be a joyous occasion such as a marriage or the arrival of a new grandchild. Whatever the occasion, the information shared comes from the member or someone close to the member.



Participation and inclusion in the distribution is strictly voluntary. Should you wish to be removed from (or added to) the Hugs distribution, all you need to do is contact me at talp.hugs.syl@gmail.com and let me know.

Sylvia Juarez
HUGS Chair

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Not to brag, but Lubbock LPA pulled it off!
Texas ALP Annual Meeting and Education Conference
April 17-18, 2026

Here are a few highlights of the conference. We started off Thursday by meeting up with our friends coming in from Corpus Christi, El Paso, Houston, Waco, and surrounding areas. Friday and Saturday were full days of CLE with local Lubbock judges and attorneys speaking and teaching. On Saturday a memorial luncheon was held in honor of our sweet friend, Jerri Locknane. Jerri's family attended and shared stories. Morris spoke about Jerri's diagnosis and shared information about vulvar cancer, emphasizing "Awareness Saves Lives." The Presidents' Banquet on Saturday evening included recognitions, installation of officers, and announcement of the Legal Professional of the Year. Congratulations to our very own Beatrice Duenez!



Thank you The Legal Connection, Inc., Pro Care Injury Specialists, G&G Ministries, Ana Tutor, and Inside Out Foundation for being vendors.

Gabi (TALP angel) is now "*Jerri*"!



First Timers





Lubbock LLPA



**We are proud to announce our 2026-2027 Officers.
Congrats to all and well wishes for a successful
upcoming year.**

2026-2027 OFFICERS

President - Brittini Hall
Treasurer - Alexandra Bennett
Secretary - Kirsten Kindler
Director - Laura DeLeon

WACO LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION



**1st Place Winner Chapter
Campaign - Waco LPA 🏆**

**1st Place Winner Individual
Member Campaign - Emily
Folsom 🏆**



WACO LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION



Congratulations to Waco LPA for celebrating their 69th year of a successful partnership in our Tri-Level Association!!



WACO LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION



**Congratulations to the
2026-2027 Texas ALP
Executive Committee. Here's
to another year of growing,
learning and networking
together!**

**Honorary President - Jerri Locknane, Lubbock LPA
President-Elect/President- Emily Folsom, Waco LPA
Treasurer - Beatrice Duenez, Lubbock LPA
Secretary - Kirsten Kindle, Waco LPA
Parliamentarian -Donna Dendy, Waco LPA**

The Texas Docket

Advertising Rates

The Texas Docket is the official publication of the Texas Association of Legal Professionals and is published quarterly each year as a service to the legal profession. Publication dates are July 1, October 1, January 1, and April 1, with submission deadlines being May 1, August 1, November 1, and February 1. *The Texas Docket* is distributed electronically to its statewide network of members, subscribers, and others. Vendors who work in the legal field are welcome and encouraged to advertise in *The Texas Docket*.

<u>Ad Options</u>	<u>Ad Rates</u>	
Full page (9" h x 7" w)	<u>Annual</u>	<u>One Issue</u>
Half Page Horizontal (4.5" h x 7" w)	Full = \$100	Full = \$50
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	Quarter = \$50	Quarter = \$20

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For more information, contact:

Lola Smith-Gentry, ACP
806.632.7464 • lgentry@hkwwlaw.com

TEXAS ALP 2026-2027 ROSTER OF OFFICERS AND CHAIRS

(Full Roster Information Can Be Found Under Website Member Access Tab)

Chartered July 27, 1956

Elected Officers

PRESIDENT

Emily Folsom
(Waco LPA)
(EP) folsomfreelancepara@gmail.com

Honorary PRESIDENT

Jerri Locknane, PLS
(Lubbock LPA)

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Carol R. Gutierrez, PLS
(El Paso ALP)

TREASURER

Beatrice Duenez
(Waco LPA)

SECRETARY

Kirsten J. Kindle
(Waco LPA)

Appointed Officer

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Donna K. Dendy, PP, CLP, TSC-RE
(Waco LPA)

Standing Committees

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Brittini Hall
(Waco LPA)

AWARDS

Emily D. Walterscheid, PP, CLP
(Lubbock LPA)

BYLAWS/STANDING RULES

Laura DeLeon, PLS
(Waco LPA)

CERTIFICATION

(Open)

COMMUNICATIONS

Helene L. Wood, PP, PLS, TSC-RE
(Houston ALP)

EDUCATION

Marty S. Olson, PP, PLS, TSC-RE
(Houston ALP)

FALL EDUCATION CONF

Michelle McDaniel
(Corpus Christi ALP)

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Kristy Turner
(Waco LPA)

FUNDRAISING

Krysten Miller

MARKETING

Cassiday Bass
(Corpus Christi ALP)

MEETINGS COORDINATOR

Julie A. Abernathy, PP, PLS
(Waco LPA)

MEMBERSHIP

Diana (Dee) Martinez
(Corpus Christi ALP)

NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

Laura L. Rogers, PLS
(Corpus Christi ALP)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lola J. Smith-Gentry, ACP
(Lubbock LPA)

THE TEXAS DOCKET

Lola J. Smith-Gentry, ACP
(Lubbock LPA)

WEBMASTER

Julie A. Abernathy, PP, PLS
(Waco LPA)

Special Committee

TALP HUGS

Sylvia Juarez
(Lubbock LPA)

