



# THE TEXAS DAY OF CIVILITY IN THE LAW

A day to remember our constant obligation to practice civility in the law.

WRITTEN BY KATHY S. MILLS

**T**he Texas Day of Civility in the Law is proclaimed! What now?

The first step is acknowledging that civility does not denote defeat or victory; rather it embodies the very process by which great lawyers perform their work. With this foundation, one may celebrate the day through reflection, promotion, education, involvement, or simply by committing to focus on civility.

*Reflect on your experiences.* On the Texas Day of Civility, on September 17, reflect on your experience with the concept of civility and contemplate the applicable adages “no one’s perfect” and “it is always the right time to do the right thing.” Upon reflection, you will likely conclude that you and others fail at civility from time to time. When you or someone you are dealing with fails to be civil, the best thing to do is acknowledge it and move forward with renewed commitment. An extraordinary aspect of civility is that one’s commitment to the concept does not hinge on others’ action or inaction; you may begin implementing civility at any time. Let this reflection guide your desire to promote civility in a forward-thinking way.

*Promote civility in the “virtual world.”* Civility shall extend to “virtual” interactions; the concept is not limited by time or place. As we adapt to changing technology, the concepts of civility too have adapted. For example, civility comes easier in some ways, as conversations held in virtual forums are necessarily slower, with less “talking over” others. Civility in virtual proceedings is also more difficult in certain regards, as polite side-conversations are nearly impossible, hand shaking non-existent, and friendly smiles are hard to direct. Regardless of ease or existence of challenges, on the Texas Day of Civility, commit to promoting civility both in-person and remotely.

*Get Involved.* Many local bars are excitedly planning in-person and virtual programs. All are encouraged to attend these programs with an open mind, so we may all engage in an important dialogue on continuing efforts to maintain and enhance civility in our profession. If your local bar is not planning a formal event, consider holding an informal reading of the Texas Lawyer’s Creed, posting it online, or simply sending an email reminding others to act with civility to preserve our system of justice, as urged in the final paragraph of the proclamation.

*Become better informed.* Reading and reflecting on the proclamation of this celebrated day serves as a solid starting point; additionally, the proclamation repeatedly points to one other document that lawyers are urged to re-read, the Texas Lawyer’s Creed. While the Texas

Disciplinary Rules set out enforceable ways in which we must practice law, the creed is chock-full of tidbits on how, when, and to whom our civility must be extended. To participate in the spirit of the Texas Day of Civility fully, lawyers should re-read and re-affirm a commitment to the Texas Lawyer’s Creed.

In conclusion, like many of you, I see countless articles and news stories complaining of the decline of civility in the law and in general. As an idealistic, ever hopeful, “young” lawyer, I suggest that we are just as civil as we ever were, and we have simply begun paying greater attention to our failings. Whether you believe civility is on the rise or the decline, may the Texas Day of Civility in the Law serve as a reminder of our constant obligation to practice civility in the law. **TBJ**



Committee.

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