

Laura Gibson

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August 4, 2020

Co-Chairs Randy Sorrels and Jerry Alexander  
Members, SBOT Nominations & Elections Subcommittee

Re: Statement of Interest to serve as President of the State Bar of Texas and Resume

Dear Co-Chairs Sorrels and Alexander and Subcommittee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you why I am interested in serving as President Elect of the State Bar and share my thoughts regarding important issues that are currently facing our Bar.

I have had the great fortune to practice law successfully in Houston for almost 36 years. Law wasn't my original career path. Although my father was a well-regarded lawyer, I grew up at a time when the only woman in the courtroom was the court reporter. When I began my education at Texas A&M, a law degree did not seem plausible for me and so I pursued other studies.

Still, I had always loved hearing my father tell me about the clients he represented and the difference he made in their lives. Since he had never spoken to me about a career in law, I asked him what he thought about me going to law school. It was then that he told me that my mother made him promise never to encourage me to become a lawyer because she feared that being a lawyer was too stressful. My father told me I would be an excellent lawyer and offered to give me a job at his law firm so I could afford to pay for law school. Immediately after graduating, I moved back to Houston and began working as a runner at his law firm. On my first day, he asked me meet with a new client to gather facts about a car accident. From that day on, my work at his firm gave me a very realistic exposure to the practice of law. My father was triple board certified, including being certified in family law. After foregoing the clerkship interviewing process in my first and second year summers, I soon realized that I was not cut out to be a family law attorney. Having gone to school both summers, this discovery occurred just before my December graduation date.

As an early graduating 3L from the University of Houston Law Center, I interviewed for a commercial litigation position. I joined the law firm now known as Locke Lord on January 2, 1985, and I made partner in 1992. Although I served on the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee during that time, the Bar was not a focus of mine or the firm. I believe that was because working at what was then considered a big firm provided so many of the services the Bar provides to solo and small firm lawyers. The firm also didn't enthusiastically support service at the State Bar level.

A year after having made partner, I had an opportunity to form my own firm with three other firm colleagues. I went from a 90 person law firm to one with just 4 attorneys. This was shortly after lawyers started having computers and before the advent of email. While I loved practicing in a smaller environment, it presented new challenges. Before, I was viewed as one of the litigators of choice by the transactional lawyers which meant that when their clients were faced with litigation, I was asked to handle the matter. Once I moved to my own firm, those referrals stopped immediately.

Working as a small firm lawyer, I was now lonely for interaction with other lawyers and desperately in need of developing referral sources. That led me to become involved in the HBA. I soon began signing up to

participate in HBA committees. My first significant involvement was with the Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee. Our early efforts focused on providing programming to our members to assist minority lawyers in their career endeavors.

In addition to joining committees, I became involved in the Litigation and Labor & Employment Sections. I also came to realize the importance of becoming board certified in order to become known as an expert in a particular specialization. I became board certified in Labor & Employment law in 2001.

Thirty-three years after forming my own firm, my fellow partners were on the verge of retirement and I was not. Through connections with a former opposing counsel and bar colleague, I was recruited to join Dentons, a large law firm with a very small Houston office. Ironically, my job presents many of the same challenges I experienced as a small firm lawyer but gives my peers the impression that I have all the benefits associated with working for a big firm.

My Bar experience has led me to the realization that people working together for a common interest is good not only for our constituents but also for us as servant leaders. In reflection, the opportunities of which I am most grateful include leading the HBA's creation of a Houston Grand Opera performance which told the story about the first President of the HBA who put his career and money at risk representing a free African American woman who was wrongfully enslaved in 1847. After a trial to an all-white jury, he secured her freedom. Money from the performances funded pro bono services and taught students of their importance.

During my term as President of the Association of Women Attorneys in 2011, we created the Premier Women in Law Luncheon honoring women lawyers and raising scholarship funds. While this year's luncheon has been postponed due to the pandemic, scholarship proceeds from past luncheons exceed \$200,000.

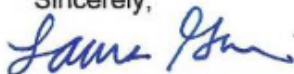
The challenges our Bar must face include maintaining our status as an integrated Bar, preserving the rule of law and making access to liberty and justice an inalienable right for all of our citizens. At the same time, we need to continue our focus on providing excellent member services including passing legislation which would provide our members with an all-state courthouse access badge, and better communicating our extensive array of services available to our members.

In our current climate, we must redouble the work of the Office of Minority Affairs which supports the Bar's commitment to creating a fair and equal legal profession for *all* attorneys including racial and ethnic minority, women and LGBT attorneys.

With the power of an integrated Bar, 105,000 members and growing, we are up for the challenge. Indeed, every opportunity I have had to serve the Bar, whether local or statewide, has made me grateful that I am a lawyer whose profession enables me to effectuate meaningful change.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be honored to have the opportunity to interview with the Committee in order to share my ideas for the Bar and to personally thank you for your service to our Bar.

Sincerely,



Laura Gibson



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## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

Partner, Dentons US LLP (2016-Present)  
Head of the Texas Employment and Labor Group  
Member of Associate Development Committee (2018-Present)  
Member of Leadership Academy (2018-Present)  
Ogden, Gibson, Broocks, Longoria & Hall, Founding Partner (1993-2016)  
Locke Lord, Associate and Partner (1985-93)

## **EDUCATION**

B.S., Texas A & M University (1982)  
J.D., University of Houston Law Center (1984)

## **BAR SERVICE**

### **State Bar of Texas**

1. **CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2018-19)**  
Executive Committee (2018-20)
2. **DIRECTOR DISTRICT 4, PLACE 1 (2016-20)**  
Co-Chair State Bar of Texas Co-Chair Succession Planning Task Force (2019-20)  
Chair of Special Committee to Nominate ABA Delegates (2019-2020)  
Annual Meeting Committee (2017-18)  
Co-Chair Nominations & Elections Committee (2019-20)  
Texas Board of Legal Specialization Appeals/Grants Committee (2016-17)  
Client Security Fund (2016-17)
3. **DIRECTOR DISTRICT 4, PLACE 5 (2012-15)**  
Chair Administration Committee(2014-15)  
Board Liaison Texas Bar Foundation, (2014-15)  
Board of Editors, Texas Bar Journal, (2012-15)
4. **OTHER BAR ACTIVITIES**  
Texas Minority Counsel Program – Steering Committee (2007-12, Co-Chair (2009 and 2010); Chair of Counsel Award Recognition Subcommittee (2011)  
Founder of Liberty & Justice for All Task Force (May 2020), committed to the non-partisan registration of voters in advance of the November 2020 elections and ultimately the education about and reformation of voting suppression laws.

Texas and Houston Bar Foundations Sustaining Life Fellow  
Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee  
State Bar of Texas Advanced Trial Strategies, Speaker(2017)  
Texas Bar Foundation District 4, Nominating Committee (2005-15)

#### **Local Bar Associations**

1. **HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION**
  - President (2015-16)
  - Treasurer and Co-Chair of Harvest Celebration (2013-14) (responsible for raising \$616,000)
  - Secretary (2012-13); First Vice President (2011-12); Second Vice President (2010-11)  
Director, Board of Directors, (2006-10)  
Labor and Employment Section (Chair 2006-07)
  - Litigation Section (Council Member 2006-09)
  - Administration of Justice Committee Co-Chair (2014-15)
  - Lawyers Against Waste (Chair 2012-13; President's Award 2013)
  - Gender Fairness Committee (Co-Chair 2011-12)
  - Law Day Committee (Co-Chair 2010-11; President's Award 2011)
  - Juvenile Consequences Program (Co-Chair 2009-10)
  - Judicial Polls Committee (Co-Chair 2006-07)
  - Minority Opportunities in the Legal Profession Committee Member (2006-08)
  - HBA Advising Small Business Institute, Co-Chair and Speaker (Sept. 2006)
2. **HOUSTON LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE**
  - President (2008-09)
  - Director, Board of Directors (2007-10; 12 -13)
3. **ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN ATTORNEYS**
  - President (2011-12)
  - Board Member (2009-13)
  - Judicial Screening Committee (2010-12)
  - Premier Women in Law Luncheon Planning Committee and Scholarship Co-Chair (2011-12; committee member 2012-2017)
4. **FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION-Southern District of Texas Chapter, Board of Directors** (2013 and 2014)

#### **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

Trial Instructor for National Institute of Trial Advocacy (NITA)

- Assistant Team Leader -- National Session July 1986; Faculty Member 2008
- Louisiana Bar Association NITA Program May 1987
- NITA Southern Regional -- Assistant Team Leader 1987 -- 1988; Faculty 2005; 2007; 2008; 2011  
NITA Gulf Coast Regional -- Faculty Member - January 1988, 1991
- Deposition NITA-University of Houston Law Center -- Faculty Member 2003 -- 09
- Deposition NITA-SMU -- Faculty Member 2006
- LSU School of Law Trial Advocacy Training Program, Section Leader 2013

Adjunct Professor - University of Houston Law Center--Legal Communications (1986 -- 1987);  
Trial Advocacy (2008-10)

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Greater Houston Partnership – Executive Women’s Partnership Committee (Leadership Council 2008-11; 2014-15; Vice Chair 2010; Chair 2011; Council of Chairs, Chair 2014)

Leadership Houston - Class XVIII; General Counsel (2009-12)

Women’s Business Enterprise Alliance (2005 – 2015)

Southwest YMCA. -- Member of Board of Directors (1993 - 1996)

Multiple Sclerosis Foundation -- MS150 Rider (1996, 1998, 1999, 2004 – 2008)

Chapelwood United Methodist Church, Member and past member of Board of Stewards

## **AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS**

Texas Minority Counsel Program - Recipient of Trailblazer Outside Counsel Award (2013) (award given annually to a lawyer who has done the most to promote diversity within the legal profession)

Houston Bar Association President's Award Recipient For Outstanding Service as Co-Chair of Law Week Committee (2010-11)

Houston Bar Association President's Award Recipient For Outstanding Service as Chair of Lawyers Against Waste Committee (2012-13)

Woman On The Move, Texas Executive Women (2012) (recognizes ten women on the move annually)

Best Lawyers In America, Employment Law (2009-20) (© 2008 by Woodward/White, Inc. of Aiken, SC)

Texas Monthly Super Lawyer (2004, 2007-19), by *Law & Politics Magazine*

Board Certified TBLS - Labor and Employment Law (2001 - Present)

Houston Bar Association, under Gibson’s leadership, earned the State Bar of Texas Award of Merit for the best overall programming by a large bar association; the Star of Achievement for its Teach Texas program and the Outstanding Partnership Award for its Juvenile Records Sealing Project