Dear Texas Attorney:

Last year, Texas lawyers contributed over $700,000 to Access to Justice through their State Bar dues statements, helping to provide civil legal services to the very poor. Thanks to your generosity, Texans in critical need were able to free themselves and their children from domestic violence, secure subsistence benefits when age or disabilities prevented them from working, obtain protections for the elderly, and receive other basic legal services.

The economic downturn continues. Interest-rate-dependent IOLTA revenues are a small fraction of former years, and other legal aid funding is shrinking. The number of poor Texans is growing with the State’s population. The need for legal services is dire. Our State’s legal aid programs are struggling. We encourage your continued generosity by making a $150 contribution included in your bar dues. The contribution is voluntary. You may choose to give more or not at all.

Texas lawyers have also been generous with their time. A survey prepared last year for the State Bar by the University of North Texas estimated that active in-state lawyers provided some 2.5 million hours of free legal or indirect services to the poor in 2009. We commend you. Still, only a fraction of the legal needs of the poor are being met. We challenge every Texas attorney to contribute 50 hours of pro bono service this year. So that the State Bar may demonstrate the value of your service to the poor, please report your pro bono hours and financial contributions online at www.texasbar.com/probonoreporting, or to the State Bar’s Legal Services Support Division.

Assuring access to justice is our professional responsibility. It is critical to the strength of the rule of law.

Sincerely,

Wallace B. Jefferson
Chief Justice

Nathan L. Hecht
Justice

David M. Medina
Justice

Don R. Willett
Justice

Paul W. Green
Justice

Phil Johnson
Justice

Dale Wainwright
Justice

Eva Guzman
Justice

Debra H. Lehrmann
Justice