TLP’s Legislative Day — A Great Success!

On January 28, over 300 people from across Texas converged on the Omni Hotel five blocks from the State Capitol for the Texans for Lawsuit Reform Legislative Briefing Day. Texans from El Paso, Laredo, Brownsville, Wichita Falls, Houston, Longview, Dallas, Fort Worth, Tyler and many other communities gathered for a single purpose: to learn more about TLP’s legislative agenda and then to personally convey their support for tort reform to their senators and representatives.

The program began with welcoming remarks from Leo Linbeck, TLP’s Chairman. Dick Weekley, TLP’s President, introduced the staff and consultants who make up the well-rounded team charged with shepherding the 7-point agenda through the legislative process. Leo’s and Dick’s presentations were followed by TLP consultants, focusing on the organization’s legislative objectives and its strategies for getting out the message that more tort reform is critically needed. The first consultant was public opinion pollster Mike Baselice, who underscored the massive popular support that exists for further tort reform. Each of the items on this session’s agenda enjoys strong public support.

Mike Toomey and Denis Calabrese outlined a legislative and communications strategy built around the premise that, while the Legislature should be sincerely thanked for its work in 1995, the job is unfinished. The key committees for tort reform this session will be Senate Economic Development (Sen. David Sibley, chair), House Civil Practices (Rep. Patricia Gray, chair) and House Calendars (Rep. Mark Stiles, chair).

Attention Now Turns to Committee Action

Over the past several weeks, the bills implementing the Texans for Lawsuit Reform legislative agenda have been filed in the House and Senate and referred to committee. In the House, the TLP bills will be heard in the Civil Practices Committee chaired by Rep. Patricia Gray (Galveston). The Senate will consider our legislation in the Economic Development Committee chaired by Sen. David Sibley (Waco).

Now that the TLP Legislative Briefing Day is over, we are focusing our efforts on making sure legislators throughout Texas hear from their constituents about the importance of passing tort reform this session. These efforts will be particularly important as the bills are set for hearing.

The first hearing on the out-of-state lawsuit legislation and the privity bill was scheduled in the Senate Economic Development Committee on February 20. We anticipate hearings for the remainder of the package will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

These hearings give the committee-members a good opportunity to closely examine the TLP legislation and ask questions. Although floor action is extremely important, it is the committee process where all legislation gets its most rigorous examination. It is also the best place for the public to demonstrate its support for tort reform either through testimony or by signing an affirmation card in support of each bill.

As the hearings are scheduled, the TLP staff will get the word out to the various organizations which have endorsed our agenda, as well as to TLP members and supporters across the state. If you are contacted about a specific hearing, please seriously consider making a trip to Austin for the hearing. In most cases, it will not be necessary for you to testify—your presence alone will speak volumes about your support for further reforms to our civil justice system.
TLR’s Legislative Day
Continued from page 1

Presentations by Beverly Kishpaugh and Ken Hoagland focused on the way TLR is deploying thousands of individuals throughout Texas who are unified in their support of legislative changes to restore fairness and balance to Texas’ civil justice system.

Because the electronic and print media are instrumental in shaping public attitudes about policy issues in Texas, TLR’s staff and consultants will be working to make sure editorial boards and reporters fully understand our objectives. These plans, including an advertising strategy based on real-life examples of frivolous litigation, were outlined by Bill Miller and David Weeks.

In the afternoon, teams of TLR supporters spread throughout the Capitol complex to meet their senators and representatives. In each office the message was the same: “Thanks for all that was accomplished last session. Please co-sponsor TLR’s 8 bills and let’s work together to finish the job.”

Because tort reform supporters came from all over the state, we were able to arrange visits with legislators from rural to urban areas and from each geographical region of Texas. Wearing “Finish Tort Reform” buttons and equipped with TLR packets explaining the highlights of our legislative agenda and listing the organizations that have endorsed TLR’s agenda, groups of business people and community leaders worked their way through the Capitol offices meeting with legislators or their staffs to express appreciation for last session’s accomplishments and asking for support this session.

To top off a productive and exciting day, TLR hosted a reception honoring the members of the 75th Legislature. A large number of representatives and senators joined Governor George W. Bush at the reception held in a ballroom of the Omni Hotel. During his remarks, Gov. Bush applauded TLR’s continuing efforts to
improve the Texas civil justice system and pledged his active support.

The TLR Legislative Briefing Day was the culmination of several months of hard work by the staff, consultants, and a core group of dedicated volunteers. We are optimistic that the effort will pay dividends in the coming weeks as the 75th Legislature begins the work of seriously considering the TLR’s 7-point agenda.

We are confident the healthy and open exchange of viewpoints that occurred during the legislative visits and the legislative reception will continue in the weeks to come as committee hearings are scheduled and the TLR legislative package is formally debated.

**AN OPEN MEMO**

**FROM:** LEO LINBECK, JR. CHAIRMAN  
**TO:** THE TLR MEMBERSHIP

As we move forward in the pursuit of a balanced civil justice system in the State of Texas, we must never lose sight of the importance of maintaining our focus. From time to time, those who wish to maintain the status quo present barriers to the passage of the TLR agenda and will throw up collateral issues that really have no bearing on the work we’re about.

I would encourage each and every one of you who are involved in the TLR mission to not be distracted by these straw men or the “rabbit trails” that are thrown in our path. The amount of money the TLR PAC contributed, whether more money was given to Democrats or Republicans, whether tort reform was addressed in 1995 — these are all interesting issues, but they don’t address the abuses that still exist in Texas’ civil justice system.

Everything TLR has done has been transparent. Since our adversaries cannot mount cogent arguments in opposition to the efficacy of the TLR agenda, they are constantly striving to distract the Legislature and the media in ways that create smoke screens to obscure the real issue.

We must continue to work for and articulate the value of having a balanced civil justice system in Texas. Let’s finish the job in ’97!

**LEGISLATIVE DAYS**

During each regular session, numerous trade associations, chambers of commerce, and other similar grassroots organizations hold “lobby days” in Austin to focus attention on their legislative objectives.

If your group is planning a “lobby day” and would like to include tort reform in your presentations or plans, please contact the Austin TLR office at 512-708-9900. We will be happy to provide a speaker, informational materials, or handouts.

**DO YOU KNOW YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR?**

During this legislative session, Texans for Lawsuit Reform supporters will be visiting and contacting by letter, phone, and fax State Senators and Representatives regarding our tort reform bills.

If you are a friend or supporter of someone serving in the State Legislature, please let us know by calling Beverly Kishpaugh at 972/480-8123.
STATEWIDE TRADE ASSOCIATION ENDORSEMENTS

American Alliance for Rights & Responsibilities
American Collectors Association of Texas
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Collectors Association of Texas
American Alliance for Rights & Responsibilities

Texas Society of Professional Engineers
Texas Society of Professional Surveyors
Texas State Florists’ Association
Texas Tire Dealers & Retreaders Association
Texas Waterway Operators Association
Textile Maintenance Association of Texas

LOCAL TRADE ASSOCIATION ENDORSEMENTS

Apartment Association of Greater Dallas
Apartment Association of Southeast Texas
Apartment Association of Tarrant County
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/Central Texas
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/Coastal Bend
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/Gulf Coast
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/Houston
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/South Texas
Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas/Southeast Texas

Texas General Contractors of America, Inc./Austin
Assoc Builders & Contractors/Mid Coast Chapter
Associated Builders & Contractors/Central Texas Chapter
Associated General Contractors, Inc./Houston
Associated General Contractors/Dallas
Association for Community Counseling Engineers of Houston
Austin Apartment Association
Austin Board of Realtors
Austin Apartment Association
Austin Association of Consulting Engineers
Austin Association of Consulting Municipal Engineers of Austin

ENDORSEMENTS

Amarillo Chamber of Commerce
Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Athens Chamber of Commerce
Bellaire Chamber of Commerce
Belton Area Chamber of Commerce
Bryan-College Station Chamber of Commerce
Canton Chamber of Commerce
Cedar Hill Chamber of Commerce
Denison Area Chamber of Commerce
DeSoto Chamber of Commerce
East End Chamber of Commerce
Eastland Chamber of Commerce
EVERMAN AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Fort Bend Chamber of Commerce
Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
Frisco Chamber of Commerce
Giddings Chamber of Commerce
Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce
Greater Houston Partnership
Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce
Greater Killeen Chamber of Commerce
Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce
Greater Orange Area Chamber of Commerce
Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
Greenville Chamber of Commerce
Hallettsville Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture
Harker Heights Chamber of Commerce
Harris County S.E. Economic Development Council
Houston County Chamber of Commerce
Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce
Humble Area Chamber of Commerce
Longview Partnership
Luftin-Angelina County Chamber of Commerce
Marble Falls-Lake LBJ Chamber of Commerce
McAllen Chamber of Commerce
Midland Chamber of Commerce
North Houston Association
North Houston Greenspoint Chamber of Commerce
Northeast Tarrant County Chamber of Commerce
Pampa Chamber of Commerce
Pasadena Chamber of Commerce
Plano Chamber of Commerce
Raymondville Chamber of Commerce
Rockdale Chamber of Commerce
San Angelo Chamber of Commerce
Shamrock Chamber of Commerce
South Montgomery County-Woodlands Chamber
South San Antonio Chamber of Commerce
Stratford Chamber of Commerce
Taft Chamber of Commerce
Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce
Weatherford/Parker Economic Council
Westchase Business Council
Wharton Chamber of Commerce
Yoakum Area Chamber of Commerce

(All are partial listings at time of printing)
### TEXANS FOR LAWSUIT REFORM LEGISLATION

#### SENATE (as of February 17, 1997)

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<td>Offer of Settlement</td>
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<td>SB 427</td>
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#### HOUSE (as of February 17, 1997)

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<td>HB 1021</td>
<td>Injured Party Protection Act</td>
<td>Frank Corte</td>
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### COMMITTEES IN WHICH TLR'S LEGISLATION IS LIKELY TO BE HEARD:

#### House Civil Practices
- Patricia Gray, Chair
- Paul Hilbert, Vice Chair
- Leo Alvarado
- Fred Bosse
- Harold Dutton
- Toby Goodman
- Joe Nixon
- Bill Roman
- Zeb Zbranek

#### House Calendars
- Mark Stiles, Chair
- Paul Hilbert, Vice Chair
- Hugo Berlanga
- Kim Brimer
- Debra Danburg
- Harold Dutton
- Christine Hernandez
- Brian McCall
- Allen Place
- Paul Sadler
- Sylvester Turner

#### Senate Economic Development
- David Sibley, Chair
- David Cain, Vice Chair
- Robert Duncan
- Rodney Ellis
- Chris Harris
- Tom Haywood
- Eddie Lucio
- Frank Madla
- Jerry Patterson
- Florence Shapiro
- Eliot Shapleigh

### TIPS ON VISITING WITH LEGISLATORS

It is very important that your own State Senator and State Representative hear from you during this session, either in person or in writing, so that they know you want them to co-sponsor TLR’s eight tort reform bills and help pass the legislation. Here are a couple of important points to keep in mind when you are contacting them:

**Visiting:** Be polite, respectful, and not pushy or overbearing. Legislators have many issues to consider, and, although tort reform is extremely important, it is not the only thing going on this session. Concentrate on the merits of the bills, not any political or other considerations. There may be a few legislators who disagree or seem reluctant, but please do not be aggressive or angry. Thank them for their consideration.

**Writing:** The same rules apply to writing. In addition, address your letter to “The Honorable (name of legislator)”, and the greeting should be “Dear Representative (or Senator)” and their name.
TLR TELEVISION AD CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Television viewers across Texas began seeing TLR’s advertisements in early February as the 1997 tort reform movement began gathering momentum. Two separate ads are currently running, and both emphasize the need for more lawsuit reform in Texas.

Despite the overwhelming public sentiment among Texans for further reforms, a few legislators and members of the media have wondered aloud whether the reforms of 1995 made the need for further reforms in 1997 unnecessary. A problem that took 25 years to develop could not be solved in just one short legislative session. The new TLR ads give specific, real-life examples of Texans talking about their own lawsuit abuse problems, and make it clear that more reforms are critically needed.

Both spots end with an appeal to “finish tort reform” and show the new TLR 800 number for Texans to call who would like to help pass the 1997 agenda. The adjacent insert is taken from the ads.

Texans For Lawsuit Reform Staff Members and Positions