



A First for TXCPA: The Virtual Annual Meeting of Members and Board of Directors Meeting

By Rhonda Ledbetter, TXCPA Volunteer and Governance Specialist

Organizational flexibility. When this guiding principle was included in the [Strategic Plan](#) TXCPA implemented three years ago, it positioned the Society to be nimble and adaptable as it addressed changing needs within the CPA profession.

However, during this year, it has enabled the organization to survive – and thrive – in a world turned upside down. It prepared the association to take a multitude of actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as transforming the in-person Annual Meeting of Members into the virtual event held in June.

COVID-19 and the Federal Response

Texas Senator [John Cornyn](#) was a special guest during the meeting. Cornyn has served as a district judge, a member of the Texas Supreme Court and as attorney general. He has been a U.S. senator since 2002, and is a member of the Senate Finance, Intelligence and Judiciary Committees. He talked with TXCPA President and CEO Jodi Ann Ray, CAE, about the current environment and Congressional work being done.

He opened by saying that he feels a number of events have raised awareness about racial injustice. The nation needs to have a conversation and to work toward reconciliation. He praised TXCPA's Diversity + Inclusion Committee and the Society's adoption of the [CEO Action](#)

[for Diversity & Inclusion pledge](#). Cornyn said that Congress is also working to address the issues around racial injustice.

Turning to the topic of COVID-19, he expressed that it quickly turned us all on our heads and resulted in lockdowns. To ensure that the businesses that employ Americans will still be operating, the [Paycheck Protection Program \(PPP\)](#) provided some relief with low-interest loans that could be converted to grants. Original funding was for 350 billion dollars and 320 billion was later added. He said that Texas received more than 450 billion dollars through 372,000 individual loans and PPP guidance is a work in progress while we're trying to keep the economy going until we can safely fully reopen.

Cornyn said that, because of the emergency, their objective with the initial bill was to direct payments to individuals who were required to stay home (in accordance with guidance from the Centers of Disease Control and government officials to mitigate the spread) and who had no income, and to incentivize businesses to keep employees on the payroll, if possible.



"We've had to deal with the dual challenges of a public health crisis and its economic consequences as we try to mitigate the spread of the virus."

– Texas Senator John Cornyn

Ray indicated that CPAs are advising businesses about PPP and have many unanswered questions as they work through details. Cornyn responded that Congress continues to work on correcting language and said he hopes that the next legislation will give more clarity.

Ray closed by expressing appreciation for the partnership with Cornyn and his staff over the years as he has reached out for TXCPA's input and expertise.

State of the Society

Chairman Jerry Spence, CPA-Corpus Christi, set the stage by explaining the Strategic Plan guiding principle of **organizational flexibility**. In March, members, their employers, their clients, their families and the association all shifted gears to focus on pandemic crisis response. Many businesses either moved to a remote environment or changed the ways their facilities operated.

Chairman-elect Jason Freeman, JD, CPA-Dallas, said that it's crucial to be responsive to the changing work and educational environment. TXCPA has maintained connections with members, adapted programs and created new responsive services that members need most.

The rapidly developed CARES Act free online CPE programs were well attended, with high ratings and appreciative feedback from members. A [Coronavirus Crisis resource page](#) was added to the website and updated daily. TXCPA social media channels quickly became more active, especially with the addition of Facebook Live Fridays.

One of the greatest values of this **professional community** is the strength in numbers and the knowledge base of CPAs across the state. The online member community, [TXCPA Exchange](#), is more active than ever before. It's a tangible way that members find value in our network.

Advocacy projects included extended deadlines, accounting being considered an essential service and clarity on new legislation. They are generating positive outcomes for members, helping them continue to serve their employers and clients.

Ray addressed the need for increased diversity and inclusion in membership.

As recent events have shone a spotlight on continued inequities in society, TXCPA has committed to effect change within itself and within the accounting profession. By expanding [diversity and inclusion initiatives](#), there will be greater opportunities to attract and retain the next generation of CPAs. TXCPA will begin to look more like the profession it serves. And new CPAs will see it as a professional home where they feel welcome and included.

Virtual Annual Meeting

– Watch Video Updates
[Click here to watch updates for the CPE Foundation, Peer Assistance Foundation, Accounting Education Foundation and CPA-PAC.](#)



Executive Board member Tim Pike, CPA-Dallas, CGMA, talked about a more personalized experience. Members consistently express the desire for more customization, a benefit that will increase relevance and value even more. Leaders continue to explore ways to ensure TXCPA is delivering the right mix of benefits and the right membership structure for the market.

Immediate Past Chairman Lei Testa, CPA-Fort Worth, CGMA, touched on the work to expand the number of future CPAs. The Society continues to promote the profession to [students](#) and educators, and programs like our student and faculty ambassador programs offer a greater presence on campuses across Texas.

[Advocacy for CPAs](#) is a benefit that members can't take for granted, reported Executive Board member Kate Rhoden, CPA-Austin. TXCPA advocated for change and clarity when COVID-19 first began to impact members. Advocacy is a year-round focus.

In preparation for the 2021 legislative session, TXCPA is developing a statewide coalition of peer professional associations with common interests regarding the significance of professional licensing. The Society's Legislative Advisory Committee will meet this autumn to develop and propose a legislative agenda for TXCPA.

2020-2021 Executive Board

[Go to TXCPA's website](#)

TXCPA Award Recipients and Videos

Listed in Annual Meeting summary at [TXCPA website](#)

Please also see the Chapters column in this *Today's CPA* issue for highlights from the Outstanding Chapter Awards.

It's not yet known exactly what issues will rise to the top during the current economic environment, but TXCPA will continue to be vigilant in protecting professional licensing and opposing taxes on professional services.

Strategic Planning Committee Chair Ben Simiskey, CPA-Houston, and Eric Curtis of Curtis Strategy reported that work on a new plan is underway. A series of virtual focus sessions has been held, which included a discussion on what the future of a successful association will look like and how to get to that destination.

CPE Foundation

During the annual meeting of the TXCPA CPE Foundation, Chair of the CPE Advisory Board Kelly Hunter, CPA-Houston, discussed the opportunity to serve more participants through the move toward more online

COVID-19 Pulse Survey

TXCPA President and CEO Jodi Ann Ray shared results from the COVID-19 Pulse Survey sent in May. The survey included just five short questions to help TXCPA and 17 other state CPA societies get a better handle on how the pandemic is affecting business. The feedback is being used to find the best ways to strategically and efficiently meet the most pressing member needs.

There were 13,400 responses to the survey, with 10% coming from Texas. Regarding the question of how TXCPA can be most helpful over the next six months, the top responses were:

- **Access to on-demand webinars on current topics;**
- **Access to live webinars on current topics with Q&A; and**
- **Guidance on new government relief programs.**

More than 90% of respondents felt the Society had met or exceeded their expectations during the pandemic. Work continues in keeping leaders and members apprised on how we're listening and responding throughout the pandemic and into recovery.

programming. There are two unlimited virtual CPE options. [The Passport](#) provides unrestricted access to a library of on-demand content for the member discounted rate of \$199 per year. [Webcast Pass](#) offers unlimited access to live webcast content for \$399 per year for members.

Through the Learning Management System (LMS), in the fiscal year just ended there were more than 1,300 unique titles available. There has been an enormous increase in the number of individuals who completed the [free Ethics course](#), more than 3,400; most importantly, it receives high marks in participant evaluations.

The Foundation has been able to leverage its investment in the LMS and in human capital to serve chapters by helping them convert [conferences](#) to a virtual environment. More than 1,700 individuals had participated at the state and chapter levels during recent months.

Accounting Education Foundation

Following up on discussion at the Midyear Board of Directors and Members Meeting, a vote was passed to dissolve the separate legal entity for the Accountancy Museum, and transition the assets and the objective of documenting and sharing the history of the profession in Texas to the Accounting Education Foundation.

The President of the [Accounting Education Foundation](#)

The CPA Advantage Campaign

Members express that promoting the value of the CPA profession should be a top priority for their association, explained Executive Board member Sheila Enriquez, CPA-Houston. Raising awareness of the profession has been a core initiative for the Society since the beginning, but this year a focused campaign was launched to utilize the TXCPA brand in promoting CPAs in Texas.

The CPA Advantage campaign provides a digital toolkit offering CPAs, future CPAs and chapters a variety of resources that can be co-branded and used to promote the work CPAs do. Consumer-focused tips also help them navigate pandemic issues like stimulus payments and new legislation.

As part of the campaign, TXCPA placed ads promoting the value of using a CPA and encouraging students to become CPAs in Texas. The pieces garnered nearly 780,000 impressions in just five months.

The Society will continue to expand these resources and promotions to bring greater awareness of the profession and of TXCPA as a trusted resource.

Board of Trustees, Art Agulnek, CPA-Dallas, provided an update on the work of the foundation. Some of the projects include: underwriting the Accounting Education Conference; making a contribution to the AICPA Minority Scholarships, with \$20,000 given to four students in Texas; and awarding \$2,500 scholarships to 50 qualified accounting students at Texas universities.

The following Accounting Education Foundation Trustees were elected, with terms ending May 2024:

- Michael Brown, CPA-Central Texas;
- Charlotte Jungen, CPA-Houston;
- Tracie Miller-Nobles, CPA-Austin; and
- Bryan Morgan Jr., CPA-Austin.

Peer Assistance Foundation

The chair of the Peer Assistance Committee, George Arce, CPA-San Antonio, conducted the annual meeting of the foundation and provided an update on the work of the [Accountants Confidential Assistance Network \(ACAN\)](#).

The group strives to inspire and equip the younger CPAs who have been mentored through the network to become the next generation of mentors. The vision for ACAN is to be a champion of wellness resources for all current and future CPAs.

Business Matters

The 2019-2020 financial report was given. TXCPA's 2020-2021 Treasurer Edith Cogdell, CPA-San Antonio, CGMA, presented budgets for the new fiscal year, which were approved.

Plan Now for Future Gatherings

Advocacy Day and the Midyear Board of Directors and Members meetings are planned for Jan. 26-27, 2021. Watch the weekly Viewpoint e-newsletter for information.

Park City, Utah is the site for the 2021 Annual Meeting of Members and Board of Directors Meeting, June 25-26. There will be speakers, ideas and connections to ignite your career. Plan to be there!

You're the toast of the town.



We're raising our glass to the professionals throughout Texas striving to make our state a better place to live, work, and play. That's why we're proud to congratulate retired BKD Partner Randy Vogel for receiving the Texas CPA Distinguished Member Award.

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