Chair’s Message

I am pleased to announce the winter edition of the Tax Texas Lawyer. Please note the following Tax Section events on your calendar:

- April 13, 2015—Property Tax Conference, Austin, Texas
- June 19, 2015—Annual Meeting of the Tax Section, San Antonio, Texas

Website Update

Progress on the Tax Section’s new website continues! We have established a color palette and selected a set of Texas-themed photographs to ensure we have an attractive site. The technical team is fine-tuning the site’s overall format and organization, giving particular attention to navigation links. The new site will be easier to navigate, include more useful and current information, and will simplify the process to update content. Target time frame to launch the new site is during the first quarter of this year.

You may notice some work on the current site, also. We are updating and reorganizing existing content in preparation for transitioning to the new site. Vicki McCullough may contact you to review or edit committee pages or other content. If you see other content issues or updates to address, please be sure to share that information with Vicki.

As part of this technology and communications upgrade, we will launch Tax Section LinkedIn and Twitter accounts. Watch for more information about how to engage with Tax Section through these accounts.

2014 - 2015 Tax Section Leadership Academy

Congratulations to the recent Leadership Academy graduates. Over the past year, this group met in Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio to learn from leading Texas tax attorneys, develop leadership skills, and develop their professional networks. Completing the Leadership Academy program advances individual careers and strengthens the Tax Section.

Our thanks to Dan Baucum, Leadership Academy Committee Chair and Program Director, who led the planning and successful completion of the 2014 – 2015 program. We also are grateful for the contributions of David Colmenero, Program Director and Christi Mondrik, current Vice Chair and Chair-Elect for the 2016 – 2017 Leadership Academy. Special recognition goes to Susan House for attending to every program detail. The guidance and insights of committee members Ryan Gardner, Charolette Noel, and Ronald Rucker is appreciated.

Our next Leadership Academy will begin in 2016. Watch this publication and the Tax Section website for information and applications.

The 2014 – 2015 Leadership Academy graduates are listed below. For more information on these graduates, please refer to the professional biographies included in this publication of the Texas Tax Lawyer.
COGS Update

The Committee on Government Submissions (COGS) process is the Tax Section’s means to provide comments on state and federal proposed rules and regulations. Sharing our experience and perspective can help improve tax laws and their administration. Providing comments also enhances the profile of the Tax Section and our members. Thank you to Bob Probasco for all his hard work and leadership in Chairing this very important committee of the Tax Section.

During the 2014 – 2015 year, COGS has filed seven comments letters and assisted the Real Estate Probate and Trust Law section with a draft bill for the Texas legislature. COGS has also participated in one public hearing and currently has three projects underway.


Our thanks to Alyson Outenreath, Charolette Noel, Cindy Ohlenforst, David Cowling, Henry Talavera, Ira Lipstet, James Griffin, Karen Currie, Kirk Lyda, Riva Johnson, Sam Megally, and Sandi Farquharson for the review and comments.

Recently submitted comments are included in this publication. Current and previous comment letters are available on the Tax Section website at www.texastaxsection.org/TaxResources/GovernmentSubmissions/tabid/104/Default.aspx.
For more information about COGS, refer to COGS Chair Bob Probasco’s article in this issue, *Have You Ever Met a Regulation That Could Be Improved?* To recommend a subject for, participate in, or lead a COGS project, please contact Bob Probasco at 214.335.7549 or robert.probasco@probascotaxlaw.com.

**CLE Programs**

Since our last issue the Tax Section has had two successful programs. The [International Tax Symposium](#) took place in Plano and Houston on November 6 and 7, 2014, respectively. Thank you to Austin Carlson for his work as Chair of the International Tax Committee and organizing these very well received programs.

Last year we launched a new program in Dallas called [Tax Law in a Day](#). Due to its success, we decided to have the program again on February 6, 2015 in Dallas. A big thank you to Lora Davis for organizing the program this year. It was a basic tax CLE program covering property tax basics, Texas State and local tax overview, traps and tricks for S corporations, nuts and bolts of UBTI, what every tax lawyer needs to know about ERISA, tax planning for real estate, community property law, anatomy of a criminal case and federal income tax developments. Many thanks to our speakers Melinda Blackwell, Kirk Lyda, Daniel McCarthy, Terry Helge, Susan Wetzel, Chris Goodrich, Celeste Lawton, Bruce McGovern and David Gair.

**Annual Meeting and Sponsorship**

We have a terrific program lined up for our Annual meeting which will take place in San Antonio on June 19, 2015. This year’s excellent program will headline Nina Olson the head of the IRS Taxpayer Advocate Service office. Other renowned speakers will include other representatives from the IRS and Justice Department as well as highly experienced practitioners addressing IRS enforcement initiatives, current areas of focus for criminal enforcement, an update on oil and gas tax litigation and avoiding unintended estate planning consequences. We will also be presenting our award of the Outstanding Texas Tax Lawyer who will be interviewed during our luncheon by Bill Elliott.

We are offering two sponsorship options in support of the Annual Meeting and other programs we offer throughout the year.

The $2,500 Platinum Sponsorship provides your firm these annual benefits:

- Three seats to the Tax Section Annual Meeting Speakers’ Dinner
- Three tickets to the Tax Section Annual Meeting
- Recognition at the Tax Section Annual Meeting in the Chair’s introductory remarks and program handouts
- Recognition on Annual Meeting e-blasts from Tax Section leadership to members of Tax Section
- Recognition throughout the year at Tax Section seminars and events
- Listing on the Tax Section website

The $1,500 Gold Sponsorship provides these annual benefits:

- Recognition at the Tax Section Annual Meeting in the Chair’s introductory remarks and program handouts
• Recognition on Annual Meeting e-blasts from Tax Section leadership to members of Tax Section
• Listing on the Tax Section website

Conclusion

The Tax Section is busy and very active. The greatest benefit you can receive as a member, however, is to become involved with one or more of the Tax Section’s activities. It will provide you with a great way to meet fellow tax professionals and make a lasting impact on the practice of tax law both in Texas and nationally. If you are not sure how to get involved, please don’t hesitate to contact me at (713) 651-5482 or at andrius.kontrimas@nortonrosefulbright.com.

Andrius R. Kontrimas, Tax Section Chair