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## Prominent White-Collar Attorney Bill Mateja Takes Helm of Dallas Bar Association

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Bill Mateja considers himself a lawyer's lawyer.

He'll approach his leadership style from that frame of mind during his tenure as president of the Dallas Bar Association.

On Sunday, the professional volunteer organization will host its inauguration ceremony for Mateja, a partner at Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton.

Mateja is a prominent white-collar criminal defense lawyer who represents Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton in his felony securities fraud case. Mateja, a former Department of Justice prosecutor, focuses much of his work on healthcare fraud and securities enforcement cases.

As DBA president, he plans to focus on strengthening the connections between members of the bar, as well as the relationship with lawyers who practice criminal law. The inauguration theme – “Get Back! To The Arts District Mansion” – is a reflection of Mateja's focal point. The DBA owns the Arts District Mansion in downtown Dallas.

Mateja also pledges to recognize criminal lawyers and judges with the bar association's annual awards (more on that in the Q&A below).

Mateja has long served on the DBA Board of Directors and several of the bar association's committees and sections. He is a past president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association.

Learn more about Bill in his Q&A with *The Texas Lawbook*:

**Why did you want to be DBA president?** I'm only two weeks into it and I'm exhausted already – so I'm not really sure .... Seriously, while I don't



think of myself as a “bar-junkie,” I enjoy bar service and have since the days that I lived and worked in Lubbock and was President of the Texas Young Lawyers Association and served on the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors and Executive Committee. I particularly like to work on programming, as I did while teaching frequently for the Justice Department and as an adjunct law professor at Texas Tech Law for 10+ years. Being president allows me the opportunity to bring my programming ideas to Dallas lawyers. For example, my friend and former partner, Tom Melsheimer, is hosting a four-part series on “Go-Getters” that is “can't miss,” as they say. We're working with the Dallas Regional Chamber to present at least two programs on the pure business side of

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the law. We're also working with the bar associations in Houston, San Antonio, Austin and Fort Worth to collaborate on programs that each city will take turns on presenting to all lawyers from such cities. Given the Rangers recent success and the All-Star Game coming to DFW in July, it made sense to explore the intersection of Law and Baseball in a series called LawBall that will feature at least two fun, after-hours "Beer, Baseball and Brats" programs.

**What goals do you have for what you'd like to accomplish during your tenure?** I'm laser focused on Dallas lawyers "getting back" to the Arts District Mansion and the Dallas Bar. Our Bar isn't as interconnected as it once was, and I want to stem this shift. The theme to my inaugural is "Get Back to the ADM" and our DBA Headnotes will focus each month on opportunities to "get back" to the Bar. We'll also be hosting what I'm calling the Biggest St. Patty's Day Party in Dallas on March 14th to provide a fun outlet for Dallas lawyers to get back to the Bar, just like the Beer, Baseball and Brats series.

**What, if anything, would you like to see the organization do differently during your time as president?** I'm also laser focused on bringing the Dallas Bar to criminal practitioners who we've forgotten along the way and who comprise only a very small percentage of our membership proportionally. While we're working on a number of things (e.g., coordination with the Dallas Criminal

Defense Lawyers Association and DA's Office, obtaining security bypasses for lawyers when they enter both courthouses, reconsidering the amount of bar dues for at least prosecutors and public defenders), let me just say that the Trial Lawyer and Jurist of the Year awards will be going to multiple criminal lawyers and judges to, as they say, make up for past sins.

**What do you want members of the DBA to know about you and your approach to this role?** I love practicing law and plan on bringing to the Bar what I consider to be a lawyer's lawyer approach. In everything we do, my first consideration is what would real lawyers think about this — does it make sense and benefit them?

**When were you president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association? And did that opportunity teach you anything that will be helpful to you as leader of the DBA?** It's been a minute since I was the TYLA president — 1997-98 to be exact. Because I visited nearly every bar association and was on the road 42 weekends that year, I know where the DBA ranks not only statewide, but also nationally. It ranks at the top! Our crown jewel, the Arts District Mansion, is second to none. There is no doubt in my mind that we have the best bar association in the country and that it is a very well-oiled machine. What all of this teaches me is the same as the advice I gave to Aaron Tobin when he became president — "just don't screw things up!"