



OUTLOOK

For members of the Municipal Justice Bar Association of Texas

Summer 1996

Six Hours Of Free CLE

G. P. (Pat) Monks
President-Elect

It's almost time for our annual free 6 hours of CLE. This year, the Dallas/Fort Worth area will host the Municipal Justice Bar Association's annual CLE program on Saturday, Aug. 17. There is no charge for MJBAT members. Non-members pay \$65 in advance registration, or \$75 on the day of the seminar.

The CLE program will be held at the La Quinta Inn, at State Highway 306 and Interstate 30 in Arlington (near Six Flags). There are currently 25 rooms being held at a special rate of \$75 per night. Call (817) 640-4142 for reservations. To receive this special rate, rooms must be reserved by July 31. Refer to MJBAT or Traffic Law Update seminar. A continental breakfast is included in the room rate.

Each participant will receive up to 6 hours of credit toward their CLE requirements, including one hour of ethics. You may not be aware of it, but in the future we will be required to attend 3 hours of ethics for our CLE requirements. Our program will

cover all the major areas for any municipal court practitioner. Topics include Pretrial Motions, Legal Ethics, Projected New Texas Legislation, Appellate Law, License Suspension Hearings and Radar.

Registration begins at 8 a.m., and the morning session is from 9 a.m. to noon. Lunch on your own, and the afternoon session is from 1 to 4 p.m. To register or for more information call Larry Rousseau at (713) 222-0550. You may fax your registration to him at (713) 659-1629.

So please set aside a day from your practice to attend the annual CLE — and invite a colleague.

New Office, New Staff

As of last August, MJBAT's senior administrator, Bill Pewitt, relocated the home office of our association to its new home at 823 Congress Ave., Suite 915, in Austin. The phone number is _____.

In addition, Bill has retained the services of a first-class administrative assistant, Susan D. Baumbach. Susan previously worked for the law firm of Akin, Gump and Strauss in the Public Law section. Before then, she was assistant to State Representative Dan Shelley of Crosby.

We are pleased to have such a competent person on board.

Now that speed limits have been raised on local freeways, Houstonians are driving faster.

In the first of what likely will be an onslaught of speed and safety studies, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports an increase in Houston vehicles exceeding 70 mph. The institute, which opposes higher speed limits due to safety concerns, chose Houston and Riverside, Calif., as sample cities for study.

After President Clinton signed a bill in November 1995 abolishing the national 55 mph speed limit, Texas highways automatically reverted to 70 mph unless otherwise posted. By law, Texas sets its speed limits to reflect the average speeds actually driven on the road, allowing slight reductions in areas that have high accident rates.

Insurance companies, police agencies and safety advocates are waiting to see if higher speeds translate into higher accident and fatality rates, as they did in 1987 when rural interstates increased from 55 mph to 65 mph.

While preliminary numbers indicate Texas will show a rise in traffic fatalities for the first four months of 1996, such studies are still premature, especially in determining the cause of a rise.

On the Southwest Freeway

south of Beltway 8, the institute said, 14 percent of drivers exceeded 70 mph when the speed limit was 55 mph. Now that the limit is 70 mph, 27 percent exceed 70 mph.

While those figures were "alarming," the institute said in a press

Rise in speeds 'alarming,' says road safety group

release, the average speed on the road actually rose only 2 mph, from 65 mph when the limit was 55 mph to 67 mph now that the limit is 70 mph.

On Texas 288 south of Beltway 8, 14 percent of drivers exceeded 70 mph when the limit was 55 mph. With the limit now 70 mph, 48 percent exceed 70 mph.

The average speed on the road increased from 64 mph (9 mph over the old limit) to 70 mph — exactly the new limit.

While the average speed on the freeways may not have made a huge leap, the high end of the speed profile was significant because it represented a higher safety risk.

In other Houston results:

- On the Katy Freeway west of the city limits, vehicles exceeding 70 mph rose from 19 percent to 29 percent. The average speed rose from 65 mph to 67 mph.

- On U.S. 90 east of the city limits, vehicles exceeding 70 mph rose

from 12 percent to 40 percent. The average speed rose from 64 mph to 69 mph.

- With the average driver now going below the speed limit on some highways instead of above it, the number of tickets issued statewide by

the Department of Public Safety has dropped drastically.

- From December 1994 to December 1995, tickets issued dropped 29 percent. From January 1995 to January 1996, they dropped 38 percent.

DPS officials were not prepared to credit the change in speed limits for the drop in tickets, however. More likely, tickets went down because a lot of grace was given due to confusion over the changing speed limit signs around the state.

Preliminary counts of statewide traffic fatalities collected by DPS show a 19 percent increase in the first four months of 1996 compared to the same time period last year. Officials took great pains to explain the preliminary nature of the numbers, which reflect various police agencies forwarding reports to DPS in Austin, and said they could be adjusted several percentage points in either direction. The time period was also small for an accurate trend study, they said.

Statewide fatalities increased 3.5 percent from 1993-1994, the last complete comparison.

These companies will not rent to you if your driving record indicates . . .

	Moving violations	Reckless disregard for life and property	Driving while intoxicated	Accidents
AVIS	2 tickets in last 2 years	2 convictions in last 2 years	1 conviction in last 6 years	Leaving the scene of an accident (no time limit)
BUDGET	3 tickets in last 3 years; or 8 points against license in states with point systems	1 conviction in last 3 years	1 conviction in last 3 years	Accident involving injury or fatality in last 3 years
DOLLAR	3 tickets in last 3 years; or 8 points in last 2 years	1 conviction in last 3 years	1 conviction in last 3 years	Accident involving injury or fatality in last 4 years
HERTZ	3 tickets in last 2 years (includes seat belt violations)	1 conviction in last 3 years	1 conviction in last 3 years	Leaving the scene of or failing to report an accident within last year
NATIONAL	3 tickets in last 3 years	2 convictions in last 3 years	1 conviction in last 3 years	3 accidents in last 3 years
THRIFTY	3 tickets in last 3 years; or 8 points in last 2 years	8 points in last 4 years	1 conviction in last 6 years	2 accidents in last 3 years; or 1 accident involving injury or fatality in last 4 years