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State Bar President Challenges Attorneys to Take Up Cause for Separated Immigrant Children

State Bar of President Joe Longley issued a call to arms for Texas attorneys to put their minds together and find a way to reunite immigrant children with their parents and protect their rights to due process.

By **Angela Morris** | June 26, 2018



Joe Longley, Law Offices of Joe K. Longley

State Bar of President Joe Longley issued a call to arms for Texas attorneys to put their minds together and find a way to reunite immigrant children with their parents and protect their rights to due process.

Just after taking the oath of office to become this year's bar president—a historic event, as Longley is the very first

state bar president elected by seeking lawyers' signatures on a petition—Longley said that the family separation crisis has become a national disaster in his view.

"We have got to figure out a way as lawyers and members of this noble profession to give honor to the words on the statute of liberty: 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free,'" said Longley to applause. He showed an image of a toddler girl wailing as an officer arrested her mother shortly after they crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico to Texas.

Longley also quoted the nation's founding documents' promises to unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and warnings that there comes a time in the course of human events when it becomes necessary to do something. He said that what's happening to the immigrant families is very close to a "human event" and lawyers must do what is necessary.

"Figure out a way to reunite these children with their parents. They may not be citizens, but they are entitled to due process and other protections while they are on our shores," Longley said. "They should not be used as pawns in some policy."

Once the families are reunited, the law will take its course, he said.

Longley, an Austin insurance law solo, also recounted that he was present on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin—preparing to enroll in law school—on that day 53 years ago when Charles Whitman opened fire on the campus. Longley's future wife, Susan, was shot and survived. It was widely seen as the nation's first mass school shooting, but today, senseless killings happen bimonthly in schools, on highways, in churches and more, Longley said.

"Mindless killing has to stop and we obviously are the people who can come up with constitutional solutions," he said. "Put our minds together, put our hearts together, to stop what I was a personal witness to that day."

