

## FOREWORD

Twenty years after he served as attorney general, John Hill's legacy remained so singular that he was at the top of my list of resources to contact when I decided to seek election to that office in 1998. Although he was a Democrat and I was hoping to become the first Republican attorney general of Texas since Reconstruction, the luster of competence and dynamism his administration gave to that somewhat dowdy office created a level of respect throughout the legal profession strong enough to easily eclipse political partisanship. I hoped to live up to the standard he set. I wanted to model my administration after his.

His advice to me was simple: Play it straight. Do it by the book. Turn aside all the suggestions and requests from people who want you to bend the law, to cut some corners, to help them solve a problem with the state or a litigant. If you ever cave in to that pressure, it's almost impossible to get back on track. Decide what you believe the law and good public policy dictate, then stick with it—even if it means you lose on the issue.

When I won my race and was confronted immediately with the temptations Judge Hill had warned me against, my respect for his core integrity and fairness deepened. As I waded into the broad array of responsibilities of the office, I gained a firsthand appreciation for his decades-old accomplishments.

One of those accomplishments involved a process most nonlawyers would term arcane: issuing written interpretations of statutes. It's the type of law book spadework I would guess might appeal to a law professor but certainly not to a courtroom lawyer like Judge Hill, who was renowned for captivating juries with folksy aphorisms. Yet one of the innovations he is most proud to claim is his elevation of the opinion-writing process to a top priority.

He reviewed (and usually returned, often with copious scribbling in the margins, prompting follow-up exchanges) every draft prepared by his staff. His predecessors had selected different staff lawyers to form the committee that wrote an opinion; each opinion was credited to the assistant who drafted it. He replaced that procedure with a standing opinions committee chaired by David Kendall, a veteran generalist from a large

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