**DEI Council Meeting Minutes
February13, 2023 - 12:00 -1:30**

The DEI Council advances diversity, equity, and inclusion and addresses the problems of bias, systemic inequities and underrepresentation in the legal profession and legal system.

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**Member Attendees:** WSBA Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel, WSBA Gov. Alec Stephens, Raina Wagner, Michael Rhodes, Laine Ellison, Lillibel Douglas, Sharon Sakamoto, Noelle Chung, Christopher Swaby

**WSBA Staff:** Diana Singleton, Nicholas Mejía, Saleena Salango

**Guests:** WSBA Gov. Nam Nguyen, Immediate Past President Brian Tollefson, William Trippet

**January Minutes**

Sharon Sakamoto moved to approve the January Meeting Minutes and seconded by Raina Wagner. The motion passed and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Comments to Equity and Disparity Workgroup’s Proposed Changes to GR 12**

WSBA Gov. Alec Stephens gave an overview of the Equity and Disparity Workgroup’s proposal to amend language in GR 12. He explained that the proposed policy change relates to any bills in the legislature that would abolish a law that had anything to do with discrimination. This would include any bills that would limit access to certain legal rights relating to access to justice around the area of discrimination. The proposed amendment will be presented to the BOG for their approval, and if approved, would ultimately go to the Supreme Court for their rule-making process. The workgroup will cease to exist after the proposal is put forward. Communications will be sent to various groups or organizations that may be interested in the proposal. The proposal will go on to first read at the March meeting and to a vote at the April BOG meeting. The March BOG meeting will be in Olympia with the WA Supreme Court in attendance. DEI Council members were welcomed to the meeting if interested but would be speaking on behalf of themselves if making public comment. Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel presented a draft letter of support for the proposed amendment which she and Miryam Gordon worked on. Miryam made a motion motioned for the DEI Council to approve the letter with one minor correction, and submit to the Equity and Disparity Workgroup to be included in the BOG meeting materials for their March meeting. Sharon seconded the motion. The motion passed by the vote of the council with nine members in favor and one abstention.

**Recruitment for Board of Governor At-Large Seat and DEI Council**

Gov. Anjilvel reminded everyone that Gov. Stephens’ At-Large BOG seat will be open in the next fiscal year and we should engage in outreach to encourage members to apply. Raina reminded everyone that the Council has three open spots now and will be recruiting for members for FY24. Raina asked for volunteers to join her for a workgroup to focus on recruitment..

**Definition of Diversity for the At-Large BOG Seats**

Gov. Anjilvel reported on the presentation of the proposal for first reading at the BOG’s January meeting. She shared that there was a robust discussion about leaving geography in and adding veteran status. Gov.  Stephens shared that he does not want to amend to take out geography, but other BOG members can motion to amend. Members expressed concern over the term geography being far too broad and instead advocated for the term rural be used if needed. Miryam stated that the MBAs were contacted but she has not heard anything from them. Diana Singleton mentioned SaNni Lemonidis shared materials with the MBAs over email but there has not been any response from most MBAs to her. Gov. Anjilvel mentioned she had heard back from the South Asian Bar Association.

Raina suggested that we keep the same definition we proposed in January for the March meeting and invite members come to the BOG meeting to show their support and/or give their feedback. It was noted the history of underrepresentation of MBAs has had a lasting impact resulting in lack of engagement and confidence. Miryam encouraged the DEI Council to explicitly invite the MBAs to the next BOG meeting as encouragement. It was added that it may be beneficial to reach out to the MBAs asking them to identify their areas of need. Everyone was in agreement that we not change the proposed language and let it as is for the second reading.

**Native Americans in the Legal Profession**

Bill Trippet came to the DEI Council meeting to share his perspectives as a Native American member (he is a member of the Jamestown-Clallam tribe) and share about the pending Supreme Court case involving Indian Child Welfare Act. Bill gave a brief history of tribal sovereignty and Native American affairs between the 1940s and the present and the precedents set. As it stands, tribes are treated as political entities as set by case precedent. Notable cases include Morton v. Santa Pueblo which was fought in the state of California.

Gov. Anjilvel encouraged Bill to apply to join the council if he is interested. Gov. Stephens reiterated Bill’s concern, asking how a treaty is raised if it is not with a sovereign nation, which will be a cause for concern if precedent is overturned. Members noted it may be beneficial to prepare legislation in the state of Washington similar to what New Mexico did to protect tribes. Washington and numerous other states filed amicus briefs for the ongoing case. Currently the tribes appear to be supportive of how they are being represented by the ACLU and the states who have filed. Members of the committee agreed it may be beneficial for Bill to discuss this matter with the Indian Law Section and Civil Rights Law Section.

**Pipeline to Profession Workgroup Update**

Mia Little shared that there will be a meeting on February 16th. Mia explained that the workgroup is in the information-gathering stage. They are gathering information about what existing pipeline programs exist in Washington and beyond, as well as programs that support underrepresented members once they are part of the profession. Mia has reached out with Street Law to discuss their pipeline program, Nicholas got information from the NYC Bar Association, and Diana got information from the WSBA Regulatory Services Department.

**Membership Demographic Study Workgroup Update**

Gov. Nam Nguyen reported that there is a draft survey that we are seeking input on now. The goal is for the survey to go out in April. The survey will include demographic information as well as how individuals are feeling in the profession.

**DEI Plan Workgroup Update**

Sharon and Miryam gave a brief report on the workgroup and acknowledged the re-envisioning of the plan is a multi-year effort and are currently in discussion about how to proceed in introducing an RFP.

**Closing**

Diana asked members to take a look at the dates and events at the end of the agenda and mark their calendars.

Meeting Adjourned at 1:35 p.m.