

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES

Seattle, WA

January 12-13, 2024

Call to Order and Welcome ([link](#))

The meeting of the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) was called to order by President Hunter Abell on Thursday, January 12 at 9:07 AM. Governors in attendance were:

Francis Adewale  
Tom Ahearne  
Sunitha Anjilvel  
Todd Bloom  
Jordan Couch  
Matthew Dresden  
Kevin Fay  
Kristina Larry  
Kari Petrasek  
Nam Nguyen  
Mary Rathbone  
Serena Sayani  
Brent Williams-Ruth  
Allison Widney

Also in attendance were Deputy Executive Director Dua Abudiab, Clarence Belnavis, Justin Bingham, Esperanza Borboa, Citalli Briseño, Executive Administrator Shelly Bynum, Michael Cherry, Mike Chin, Immediate Past-President Dan Clark, Judge Samuel Chung, Quinn Dalan, IT Director Jon Dawson, Chief Disciplinary Counsel Doug Ende, Volunteer Engagement Advisor Paris Eriksen, Gary Epperley, Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata Garcia, Miryam Gordon, Family Law Section Liaison Nancy Hawkins, Human Resources Director and Chief Culture Officer Glynnis Klinefelter Sio, Nicholas Larson, Director of Finance Tiffany Lynch, James Macpherson, Dallas Martinez, Matthew Morissey, Executive Director Terra Nevitt, Chief Communications Officer Sara Niegowski, Broadcast Services Manager Rex Nolte, Sophia Palmer, Director of Advancement Kevin Plachy, Terry Price, Mercedes Riggs, Member Wellness Clinical & Outreach Lead Adely Ruiz, Sharon Sakamoto, Equity and Justice Lead Saleena Salango, Andrea Saunders, Assistant General Counsel Catherine Schur, General Counsel Julie Shankland, Chief Equity and Justice Officer Diana Singleton, Alec Stephens, Equity and Justice Lead Bonnie Sterken, Member Services and Engagement Manager Julianne Unite, Raina Wagner, and A. Yanasak

Member & Public Comments ([link](#))

Nancy Hawkins shared the feedback she provided to Pres. Abell and Executive Director Nevitt about her concerns with having speakers outside of the Board meetings.

#### Consent Calendar ([link](#))

Pres. Abell asked if anyone wished to remove an item from the consent calendar. Gov. Petrasek moved for approval. There was no discussion. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Rathbone, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

#### President's Report ([link](#))

Pres. Abell shared the meeting theme, Honoring Minority Bar Associations and reported that the in-person events scheduled for this meeting will have to be rescheduled since the meeting was moved to an all-virtual format due to inclement weather. President Abell also provided an update on his activities engaging the public and building understanding and trust in the legal profession and rule of law, as well as his engagement with bar presidents in Texas and Michigan relating to the University of Washington's football team and its championship bid.

#### Executive Director's Report ([link](#))

Executive Director Nevitt referred to her written report.

#### Revisions to WSBA Fiscal Policies ([link](#))

Treasurer Adewale provided an overview of the two fiscal policy revisions being recommended, which would 1) increase the allowed reimbursement amount for gratuity for ground transportation and 2) revise the reporting process when the Executive Director reallocates budget funds. Director Lynch provided additional detail. Gov. Fay motioned to approve the policy changes as presented. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Rathbone, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

#### Access to Justice Board Annual Report ([link](#))

Members of the Access to Justice Board reported on major initiatives and accomplishments of the past year, including that they have been focused on the centering of community voices and making sure that people with lived experiences are represented on the board and in decision-making processes. Discussion followed about which communities and people they provide outreach to and how the Board of Governors can support their work, including by establishing a loan repayment program for recent law-school grads who go to rural areas to work; providing compensation to community members who serve on WSBA entities; and adding a community member or "non-lawyer" to the Board of Governors.

#### Superior Court Judges Association Presentation ([link](#))

Superior Court Judges Association President Judge Samuel Chung provided a brief overview of the association and answered questions from the Board. Concerns of the Judges Association raised during discussion included retention, recruitment, and qualifications of judges and lack of resources and staff. Discussion followed about how the Board of Governors can support their work, including by standing up for judges when being unfairly maligned and working with the association to support its legislative proposals.

#### Discussion with MBA Leaders Regarding BOG Updates and New DEI Plan ([link](#))

DEI Council Co-Chair Gov. Anjilvel introduced the DEI Plan Workgroup project and its co-chairs. Co-chairs Sharon Sakamoto and Miryam Gordon presented background information and the plan to refresh the WSBA's Diversity Plan, which was originally created in 2013 with the understanding it would be updated every 10 years. Discussion followed regarding plan accountability, widespread inclusion, and how to solicit feedback and input. The co-chairs asked the Board to think about the DEI plan, process, and final product and to contact them with comments and feedback. They specifically asked the Board to consider what “diversity, equity and inclusion” means to them, and why is it important.

#### Annual Harassment Training ([link](#))

Clarence Belnavis from Fisher Phillips provided anti-harassment training.

#### Approve Member Wellness Task Force Charter ([link](#))

Director Plachy provided background information about the proposed task force, including the Board of Governors’ action to adopt member wellness as a strategic priority in November 2023. Gov. Dresden spoke about the strength of candidate Justin Bingham to serve as chair of the proposed task force. Gov. Adewale spoke about the roots and importance of the initiative. Gov. Adewale moved to approve the task force charter. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

Gov. Adewale made a motion to accept the President's appointment of Task Force Chair Justin Bingham. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

#### Creation of Member Status Workgroup ([link](#))

Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata de Carvalho Garcia explained why this workgroup is being recommended and its proposed scope of work. The workgroup's main task will be to evaluate the license status options currently available to WSBA members who are retiring from the practice of law or otherwise leaving the legal profession and to propose revisions or alternatives. Discussion followed about workgroup membership.

Gov. Adewale moved to amend the charter as presented to add an at-large position reserved for someone who identifies as a senior lawyer/member who has been shown to be in favor of adding a retirement status or alternative. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

Gov. Adewale moved to adopt the charter as amended. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

Gov. Adewale moved to accept President Abell's appointment of Gov. Petrasek as chair of the workgroup. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Couch, Widney and Williams-Ruth were not present for the vote.

#### Discussion of Bar Licensure Task Force Draft Recommendations ([Part 1 link](#)) ([Part 2 link](#))

President Abell asked to step down from chairing the discussion so he could participate. President-Elect Anjilvel declined to accept the chairmanship as she wanted to retain her vote. Treas. Adewale agreed to chair the discussion.

Gov. Couch moved to permit the Law Clerk Board and DEI Council to send their comments about the task force recommendations to the Task Force and to the Court. Discussion followed, including that some Governors disagreed with the comments, agreement that the Court and Task Force should receive the comments, and whether the entities need permission to submit comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Gov. Couch moved that the Board issue a statement to the Supreme Court in support of task force's draft recommendations, including a statement that the Bar Licensure Task Force ensure the recommendations are carried out in a way that is equitable to those that have already completed the requirements of the APR 6 Law Clerk Program. Gov. Williams-Ruth commented that Gov. Couch's motion was out of order because it would conflict with an existing board resolution in favor of maintaining the bar exam. Gov. Couch sought to amend his motion to include retraction of the previous resolution. General Counsel Shankland read from Roberts Rules of Order to guide the process for how to alter prior board action. Gov. Couch agreed to bifurcate his motion.

Discussion followed about how the proposals would protect the public and overcome systemic problems with the bar exam; whether the Board has sufficient information to make decisions about the task force's recommendations; and whether the board would need to rescind its previous resolution in order to make a comment on the task force's draft reports.

Gov. Couch restated his motion to rescind the prior resolution adopted by the Board of Governors in 2021. Motion passed 8-5.

Gov. Couch restated his motion for the Board of Governors to issue a statement in support of the task force's draft recommendations. Motion passed 8-5.

#### Governor Roundtable ([link](#))

Gov. Williams-Ruth sought board member interest in having a conversation about the incongruity of the WSBA fiscal year versus the calendar year. Discussion followed.

Gov. Nguyen reported that two organizations today had asked for WSBA's support in seeking funding from Legislature and stated his intent to reach out and follow-up.

Treas. Adewale invited all governors to attend the Legal Foundation of Washington's Goldmark Luncheon in February and to sit at his table.

#### Meeting Feedback ([link](#))

Gov. Fay commented that WSBA staff did a wonderful job pivoting the meeting to an all-online format.

Treas. Adewale thanked President Abell for making the call to go remote at the right time, saving everyone who would have traveled a great deal of hassle. Treas. Adewale suggested that WSBA always plan for the January meeting to be virtual.

Gov. Bloom thanked the staff and commented that it was a good call to cancel the in-person component of the meeting.

Executive Director Nevitt reminded participants that the chat should not be used for substantive comments as it is not visible to online guests.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Pres. Abell adjourned the meeting at 11:57 PM on Saturday, January 13, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

*Terra Nevitt*

Terra Nevitt

WSBA Executive Director & Secretary