

Washington State Bar Association

1325 Fourth Ave., Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98101-2539



Contact: Jennifer Olegario, Communications Manager
206-727-8212; jennifero@wsba.org

Washington State Bar Association denounces recent acts of violence and reaffirms equity and inclusion principles

SEATTLE — The Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association, encouraged by the state’s minority bar associations, recently adopted the following statement regarding recent acts of violence, and reaffirms its principles on equity and inclusion:

Washington State Bar Announcement Denouncing Recent Acts of Violence and Reaffirmation of Equity and Inclusion Principles

The societal movement towards equity and inclusion is under attack. The city of Charlottesville, Virginia, experienced reprehensible acts of violence at the hands of an emboldened white nationalist movement. Lives were lost, dozens of people were injured, and the aftermath has thrown race relations in our country into a state of national turmoil.

The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) holds a deep commitment to its stated mission of serving the public and the members of the Bar, ensuring the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. The WSBA is part of the judicial branch, exercising a governmental function authorized by the Washington Supreme Court to license the state’s nearly 40,000 legal professionals. The WSBA both regulates legal professionals under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association.

Our service to members of the Bar and the public is a function that must be conducted with the broad and deep lens of equity and inclusion. We exist to regulate the practice of law AND to serve our members and the public as a professional association. It is in service to our members and to the public that we emphasize our commitment to an equitable and inclusive society. This commitment demands that we clearly articulate a resolute stance and support of non-violence against any human for any reason. Violence perpetrated against unarmed people is a deplorable act. The people of Charlottesville are representative of the public served by our members and who access our services.

History has proven that justice does not happen within a vacuum and is not exercised without the oversight, involvement and expertise of those trained in the law.

The Washington State Minority Bar Association community has been an important partner with the WSBA in this commitment within our legal profession. This community is critical to the continued understanding and development of laws, practices, and policies intersecting diversity, equity and inclusion. We highly esteem the work of this community and experience them as partners and collaborators in the pursuit of justice. In light of this partnership we express our support as allies in the denunciation of the lethal acts of violence perpetrated in Charlottesville, Virginia.

We recognize and appreciate that the First Amendment is a critical facet of our democracy. We unwaveringly support its protections, even if we do not agree with the statements being made. However, violence, threats, and physical intimidation are not protected by the First Amendment and have no place in a civil dialogue.

We share a duty with government leaders to speak up when injustice occurs in order to reassure our communities, including those communities that are minority or historically disadvantaged, that we will use all resources at our disposal, including legal resources, to protect the rights and safety of everyone.

It is incumbent upon us, given our unique role in society, our understanding of the practice of law, and our ethical commitment to serving the public that we clearly and forcefully not only denounce violent, divisive, marginalizing,

oppressive and inequitable behavior; but that we step into any void created by those actions regardless of where it originates from.

This is a country governed by laws. Our laws are designed not only to protect democratic principles, but also to protect people from violence and harassment in the guise of political speech. The WSBA pledges to work vigorously to ensure that those ideals work in practice as well as in principle. We will not tolerate anything less for the people of Washington.

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA is part of the judicial branch and is authorized by the Washington Supreme Court to license the state's 40,000 lawyers and other legal professionals. In furtherance of its obligation to protect and serve the public, the WSBA both regulates lawyers and other legal professionals under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA's mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice.

###