

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES

Seattle, WA

November 7-8, 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 Sunitha Anjilvel on Thursday, November 7, at 9:03 a.m. Governors in attendance were:

Brent Williams-Ruth
Mary Rathbone
Matthew Dresden
Tom Ahearne
Kevin Fay
Kristina Larry
Todd Bloom
Nam Nguyen
Allison Widney
Jordan Couch
Kari Petrasek
Emily Arneson
Parvin Price
Alain Villeneuve

Officers and Executive Staff in attendance were President Sunitha Anjilvel, President-Elect Francis Adewale, Immediate-Past President Dan Clark, Executive Director Terra Nevitt, Chief Communications and Outreach Officer Sara Niegowski, Director of Finance Tiffany Lynch, Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata Garcia, Director of Advancement Kevin Plachy, Chief Equity & Justice Officer Diana Singleton, General Counsel Laurie Powers, Deputy Director Dua Abudiab and HR Director & Chief Culture Officer Glynnis Klinefelter Sio.

Also in attendance were Alec Stephens, Aziza Ozgoren, Betsylew Miale-Gix, Bobby Henry, Catherine Schur, Cathy Biestek, Chris Newbold, Dean Anthony Varona, Dean Tamara Lawson, Emily Rose, Hugh Spitzer, Dean Jacob Rooksby, Jennifer Olegario, Jeremy Wood, Joe Gouge, John Seannel, Katherine Skinner, Lisa Amatangel, Matthew Lemaster, Michael Hutchins, Monte Jewell, Nancy Hawkins, Paris Eriksen, Rex Nolte, Sandra Ferguson, Sanjay Walvekar, Shelly Bynum and Steve Crossland.

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

President Anjilvel opened the session for public comments. There were none.

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

Executive Director Terra Nevitt referred to her written report and invited questions. There were none.

Consent Calendar ([link](#))

Gov. Tom Ahearne requested to remove the Judicial Recommendation Committee Recommendations from the consent calendar for discussion during executive session. Gov. Brent Williams-Ruth moved to approve the remaining items on the consent calendar. Motion passed unanimously.

2026 License Fees ([link](#))

Treas. Kari Petrasek and Director of Finance Tiffany Lynch presented the Budget and Audit Committee recommendation to increase the full active membership fee by \$10, raising it to \$468, effective 2026. This recommendation is based on a 5.6% cost of living adjustment, offset by using \$17 from reserves per member. The Board debated the merits of incremental fee increases versus maintaining the current rate, considering past commitments to keep fees flat and the potential impact on members. Gov. Jordan Couch moved to approve recommendation. Motion passed 10 to 4.

Member Status Workgroup Final Report & Second Read on Proposed Bylaw Amendments ([link](#))

Chair Petrasek and Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata Garcia presented the final report and proposed bylaw amendments from the Member Status Work Group. A key recommendation is to rename "honorary status" to "emeritus status," which is supported by 79% of surveyed honorary members. Gov. Kevin Fay moved to adopt the Member Status Workgroup's recommendations and proposed amendments to the WSBA bylaws with the additional technical amendments submitted by Chief Garcia and Chair Petrasek. As requested by the workgroup, recommendations 1 and 4 should be effective upon approval by the Supreme Court and all others should be adopted with an effective date of October 1, 2025 to ensure sufficient time for implementation and to align with the beginning of the fiscal year. Motion passed unanimously. Gov. Alain Villeneuve was not present for the vote.

Second Read on Volunteer Lived Experience Stipend Policy ([link](#))

Executive Director Nevitt and Chief Equity and Justice Officer Diana Singleton presented a proposed policy on lived experience expert (LEE) stipends for second read. The policy aims to provide stipends to low-income volunteers contributing their expertise to the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) initiatives by removing financial barriers and aligning with state efforts to foster equitable decision-making. The Board discussed the potential financial impact on WSBA's budget, alternative funding sources, and the broader implications of compensating volunteers. Gov. Couch moved to approve the proposed policy on lived experience stipend. The motion failed 9 to 3 with two abstentions.

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

Employment attorney Jeremy Wood of Fisher Phillips provided a comprehensive training session on workplace harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.

Kick-off for FY26-FY29 Strategic Plan Development ([link](#))

President-Elect Francis Adewale emphasized the importance of long-term thinking beyond individual tenures. Executive Director Nevitt outlined the strategic planning process, highlighting the formation of a

steering committee co-chaired by herself and President-Elect Adewale, with members from the Long Range Strategic Planning Council and the Executive Leadership Team. Chris Newbold from ALPS was introduced as the facilitator for the strategic planning process. During the session, board members and senior staff participated in an exercise to identify two major goals for the Bar Association to achieve by 2029. Key themes included enhancing access to justice, integrating technology, promoting diversity and inclusion, and revising bylaws.

Executive Session ([link](#))

President Anjilvel moved the Board to executive session at 3:32 p.m. to discuss legislative activities and recommendations from the Judicial Recommendation Committee, which had been removed from the consent calendar. The session concluded at 4:45 p.m. and the Board resumed the public session.

Gov. Williams-Ruth moved to approve the Judicial Recommendation Committee's recommendations. Motion passed unanimously. Gov. Villeneuve and Gov. Widney were not present for the vote.

Day Two ([link](#))

President Anjilvel called Day Two of the Board meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Committee on Professional Ethics Recommendation Re Suggested Amendments to Comment [6] to RPC 1.5 Re Contingent Fees ([link](#))

Chair Monte Jewell and Subcommittee Chair Professor Hugh Spitzer presented the proposal, which aims to extend the prohibition of contingent fees to include the dissolution of domestic partnerships and committed intimate relationships (CIRs), as well as related child custody and guardianship issues. The proposal was developed in consultation with various stakeholders, including the Family Law Section and law professors, and faced no opposition. Discussion highlighted the evolving terminology of CIRs and the importance of aligning legal language with current practices. Gov. Couch moved to approve the proposal as submitted by the Committee on Professional Ethics. Motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps for Upcoming Vacancy in At-Large Seat ([link](#))

The Board discussed the vacancy for the At-Large seat following Governor Williams-Ruth's resignation. The Board expressed gratitude for his significant contributions. The discussion focused on whether to fill the vacancy, with the consensus being to proceed with an appointment. Executive Director Nevitt emphasized that the bylaws do not specify a process for filling a vacancy with less than a year remaining. She recommended to follow the process used for longer vacancies, involving an appointment by the Board. Executive Director Nevitt also presented the option of having the DEI Council vet candidates, as it would for an At-Large election in the ordinary course. Discussion followed about expediting the process to have candidates ready by January. Gov. Petrasek moved to fill the At-Large seat by appointment, with DEI Council vetting, aiming for a January decision. Motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

2025 WSBA Legislative Priorities ([link](#))

Chair Kevin Fay, and Sanjay Walvekar presented the 2025 WSBA legislative priorities and a proclamation in support of studying the effects of a non-unified court system. The priorities remain largely unchanged, with notable additions including support for public defense funding and support for study of the non-unified court system. Gov. Fay moved to approve the legislative priorities as presented. The Board discussed the feasibility and potential impact of a unified court system, acknowledging the challenges

posed by existing local rules and disparate technologies. Executive Director Nevitt emphasized that WSBA would not be leading the effort but be supporting legislative efforts led by Representative Jamila Taylor. Gov. Arneson moved to amend the proclamation to ensure that stakeholders from rural counties are meaningfully engaged. Motion to amend passed unanimously. The Board voted to approve the underlying motion as amended. The underline motion as amended passed unanimously. Gov. Rathbone was not present for the vote.

Governor Roundtable ([link](#))

Parliamentarian Alec Stevens outlined procedural guidance for amendments and emphasized the importance of a clear process for motions. Gov. Nguyen raised the issue of fee waivers for active military personnel, suggesting collaboration with Regulatory Chief Garcia to explore potential changes. The Board discussed the need for a structured approach to evaluating new ideas, with a consensus to direct the military fee waiver issue to the Member Engagement Council for further exploration.

Legislative Review Committee Recommendations ([link](#))

The Legislative Review Committee Chair Matt Master and Corporate Act Revision Committee Co-Chair Michael Hutchings presented a proposal for amendments to the Washington Business Corporation Act. The proposed changes aim to provide more flexibility in corporate board committee structures and address previous voting threshold inconsistencies. The Board discussed clarification on specific language changes, such as the Oxford comma issue, and broader concerns about the impact of such legislation on consumer protection and the public interest. Gov. Fay moved to approve the proposal. Motion passed 10 to 3. Gov. Villeneuve was not present for the vote.

Discussion with Law School Deans and Law Clerk Board Leadership ([link](#))

The Deans of Washington's three law schools and the Law Clerk Board Chair joined the board meeting to discuss current initiatives and challenges in legal education. Dean Lawson highlighted the University of Washington's 125th anniversary and a transformative \$45 million gift aimed at enhancing leadership in law and global development. Dean Varona from Seattle University emphasized the success of their hybrid hubs addressing legal deserts and the diversity of their entering class. Dean Rooksby of Gonzaga Law School shared curricular reforms and the success of their LGBTQ rights clinic. Chair Rose discussed the growth and accessibility of the law clerk program. Key points included the rising cost of legal education, the importance of diversity, and the integration of tribal law into curricula. The Board expressed interest in supporting initiatives to alleviate student debt and enhance access to legal education, particularly in underserved areas. The meeting concluded with a commitment to ongoing collaboration between the Board and educational institutions.

Meeting Feedback ([link](#))

The Board acknowledged outgoing Governor Williams-Ruth, highlighting his focus on team building and collegiality among board members. President Anjilvel extended an invitation to the Board to attend the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association reception, emphasizing its significance as a valuable networking opportunity.

Adjournment

There being no further business, President Anjilvel adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m. on Friday, November 8, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Terra Nevitt

Terra Nevitt

WSBA Executive Director & Secretary