

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Board of Governors January 2023 Meeting Update

A summary prepared by the WSBA of the Board of Governors (Board) meeting held Jan. 13-14, 2022, in Seattle. The agenda, materials, and video recording from this Board meeting are [online](#). The next regular meeting is March 3-4 in Olympia. The Board of Governors is WSBA's governing body charged with determining general policies of the WSBA and approving its annual budget. To subscribe to the Board Meeting Notification list, email barleaders@wsba.org.

NEED TO KNOW

1. **Change in “Diversity” Definition for Board Seats:** Your feedback is important! In 2001, the Board created two new at-large seats designated for members from historically underrepresented communities. The WSBA’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council is now recommending a bylaw amendment to define candidacy for these seats in a way that better supports the original intention—to expressly include in Board leadership people with lived experience in underrepresented communities (people who, historically, have been overtly or covertly banned from the profession and leadership). The proposed changes to the definition include adding religion and ethnicity; changing gender to gender expression and gender identity; and removing geographic area, types of practice, and years of practice from the eligibility criteria. Please see the complete proposal on [page 61](#) and send feedback or questions to diversity@wsba.org. This proposed bylaw amendment will come back in March for potential Board action.
2. **Bar exam alternatives being considered.** Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis and Seattle University Law School Dean Anthony Varona provided an update about the [Bar Licensure Task Force](#), which they are co-chairing to explore bar-exam alternatives for lawyer licensure; that includes researching bar-exam efficacy data and alternatives in place in other jurisdictions such as diploma privilege, an educational portfolio model, and experience working under the guidance of an experienced lawyer. The task force expects to recommend some sort of alternative to the Washington Supreme Court and, prior to any final decision, to undertake a robust outreach tour to gather feedback, likely in the summer of 2023. The task force is also considering the efficacy of the Character and Fitness process. For more information, contact [Governor Brent Williams-Ruth](#), WSBA’s representative to the task force. ([See page 128.](#))
3. **Nominate Legal Luminaries!** Who epitomizes excellence in the profession? Who deserves to be recognized for going above and beyond to uphold the Rule of Law and expand access to justice? Those names and faces that just popped into your mind—[please nominate them for a 2023 APEX \(Acknowledging Professional Excellence\) Award!](#)

OTHER BUSINESS

Board Priorities. After an October planning meeting, the Board approved high-level priorities for the organization, including to increase member engagement in the WSBA’s volunteer community, establish a process for a WSBA program review, support rural practice, develop a plan for the future of WSBA’s physical space, and increase WSBA’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. While acknowledging this list may not be 100% perfect, the board acknowledged this is the start of an ongoing strategic-goal setting and accountability process that will build in stakeholder feedback and continue to evolve. ([See page 3.](#))

Legal-Help Linking Platform. Based on member and public feedback—and the state bar’s mission to promote access to justice—the WSBA is exploring if and how to create a platform (called Washington Legal Link) to match people with legal needs to legal practitioners who can help. Board members heard about the history of the project and listed the questions they need answered and the stakeholders they need consulted before they can make a decision whether to move forward. The project will come back with more information at an upcoming board meeting. ([See page 112.](#))

ATJ and MBA Collaboration. The Board met with leaders of Minority Bar Associations (MBAs) and Access to Justice (ATJ) Board to talk about their work, goals, and priorities, and how to continue to support and learn from each other. The Board of Governors expressed its commitment to robust diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts including work by the [WSBA DEI Council](#), and the importance of ongoing collaboration with MBAs and the ATJ communities, which are critical to the Board’s intention to make inclusive, equitable leadership decisions.

Access to Justice Board Annual Report. The Access to Justice (ATJ) Board presented some main themes from its 2022 report, including the primary focus on racial equity, the integration of the ATJ Board’s community advisory panel—who consist of leaders from communities disproportionately impacted by the legal system, the “de-silo-ing” of criminal and civil funding, procedures, and advocacy, and their own internal equity work. They also reported on nearing the conclusion of the Yakima Needs Assessment, which will provide data for resource decisions for legal services for undocumented communities. Looking ahead, the current director of the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) has announced he will step down, and the ATJ Board, by statute, will be responsible for submitting the names of three finalists to the Washington Supreme Court. Finally, everyone is invited to mark their calendars for the 2023 ATJ Conference, Sept. 28-30, in Tacoma. ([See page 5.](#))

The Board also:

- Moved \$1.7 million from the unrestricted reserve fund to the facilities reserve fund, brining the total of the facilities fund to \$2.5 million. The intention is to make sure money is earmarked to implement whatever decision the board makes about long-term WSBA facilities once the current office lease expires at the end of December 2026. ([See page 126.](#))
- Received training about email security. ([See page 108.](#))
- Participated in leadership training.
- Supported the annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Luncheon hosted by the King County Bar Association.

4.