



Board of Governors Meeting Recap

Jan. 17–18, 2025

A summary prepared by the WSBA of the Board of Governors (Board) meeting held Jan. 17-18, 2025, in Seattle. The agenda, materials, and video recording from this Board meeting are posted online. The next regular meeting is March 21-22, 2025, in the Olympia area. The Board is the 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.

TOP TAKEAWAYS

Congratulations to the WSBA's Newly Seated At-Large Governor. [Christopher Bhang](#) was appointed to fill a recently vacated at-large seat and sworn in by Chief Justice Debra Stephens. Gov. Bhang's term will run through the end of fiscal year (Sept. 30). Meanwhile, this at-large position will be included in the slate of Board positions up for election this spring, to be seated at the start of the next fiscal year (October). [Are you interested in Board service? Consider running!](#)

A Focus on WSBA's Strategic Goals

How are Legal Practitioners Using Technology—and How Can the WSBA Help? Leaders of the WSBA's [Legal Technology Task Force](#) provided an update focused on the results of a recent member survey. Top takeaways include: The vast majority of members are *not* using generative AI applications, and they have significant concerns about the reliability of such technology in legal practice and the ethics of its use; most are clamoring for training and tools to help them integrate new technologies into their practice; and fewer than 79 percent said they are using even the most rudimentary cybersecurity tools, such as multi-factor authentication. The survey results will guide the continuing work of task force members as they research and talk to national experts about what is most impactful and important to members. The task force is supporting a WSBA strategic goal to assess technology-related opportunities and threats to determine how to best support legal practitioners and protect legal-service consumers. The task force expects to submit an action-oriented report to the Board of Governors by this summer. ([See page 303.](#))

Setting a New Course for Equity and Justice. Leaders of the WSBA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council provided an update about their work to draft an Equity and Justice Plan, a roadmap for the next five years that will help the WSBA strengthen the legal profession to better represent and serve all Washingtonians. The Council planned to bring a first draft to the Board in January, but that has been delayed until March for a good and welcome reason: There was

significant member and public feedback on the initial draft, so the Council is taking the necessary time to carefully review and consider the feedback. Once a new draft is complete, the Council will post it on the [WSBA website](#) and present it to the Board in March for a first reading. The Equity and Justice Plan will be a key component of the WSBA's strategic goal to improve the experience of belonging among legal professionals to foster a diverse profession where everyone is welcome and able to thrive, which promotes public confidence in the legal system and improves access to legal services. [Learn more about the Equity and Justice Plan.](#)

Support for Rural Practitioners in the Legislature. The Board authorized representatives of its Small Town and Rural (STAR) Council to write a letter to inform legislators considering [Senate Bill 5027](#), establishing a loan repayment program for public defense attorneys and prosecutors. The letter will identify relevant concerns being researched by the STAR Council—including the critical need for lawyers in some rural areas, particularly public defenders and prosecutors—and how a loan repayment program could be part of the solution. The STAR Council arose from the WSBA's strategic goal to support rural practice and access to justice in small towns and rural parts of the state.

The Board also:

- Voted to recommend adoption of amendments to RPC 1.16(a) (and accompanying comments 1 and 2) to the Washington Supreme Court, as advanced by the WSBA Committee on Professional Ethics. The amendments would bring the RPC in alignment with ABA Model Rule 1.16, which addresses declining or terminating representation. Adopted by the ABA in response to growing concerns that attorneys could unwittingly be caught up in money laundering, the amendments largely focus on the duty to inquire about a prospective or current client's objectives so that a lawyer will not inadvertently be drawn into a circumstance where the client is using a lawyer's services to commit a crime or fraud. ([See page 463.](#))
- Considered creating a Governance Committee to be responsible for regularly reviewing Board policies and WSBA bylaws for consistency, accuracy, and efficiency; the committee would complete a rotating triennial review of bylaws, policies, and Board committees and entities. The Board will vote on whether to create this committee in March. ([See page 484.](#))