

ABOUT THE WSBA

History of the WSBA

The Washington Bar Association was formed in January 1888, in the last year of the Washington Territory. In those days, all lawyers who had cases set for argument before the Supreme Court were required to be present at the beginning of the Court term in January. Sometimes, lawyers were required to wait for days or weeks for their cases to be called on the calendar. In this setting, a group of lawyers met in the Supreme Court chambers in Olympia and decided to form the Washington Bar Association. The name was changed to the Washington State Bar Association in 1890. The association originally consisted of 35 lawyers, and membership cost \$5 per year. At that time, it was a purely voluntary organization and did not include all lawyers admitted to practice.

By the 1930, as more lawyers were admitted to practice, it was proposed that the Association have a more formal structure. In 1933, the State Bar Act (RCW 2.48) was enacted, which established the Washington State Bar Association as an agency of the state and made membership mandatory for those licensed to practice law in Washington. Alfred J. Schweppe, a Seattle lawyer and former Dean of the University of Washington School of Law, who was instrumental in drafting the State Bar Act, served as the WSBA's first executive secretary.

In 1982, the Washington Supreme Court began licensing Limited Practice Officers to engage in the limited practice of law by selecting, preparing and completing documents to effectuate real estate and real property closing transactions. Rules were developed to provide for practice with an LPO license, including rules covering ethical practice, and administration of admission, licensing, continuing education and discipline. In 2002, the Court transferred the administration of this program and its policy board to the WSBA, and in January 2017, the Board of Governors voted to include Limited Practice Officers as members of the WSBA. Beginning in September 2017, the administration of LPO admissions, licensing and continuing education will all be handled in one coordinated system with that of other WSBA members.

In 2012, the Washington Supreme Court entered an order permitting Limited License Legal Technicians to engage in the limited practice of law in Washington, including by providing advice and assistance to clients, and directed the WSBA to administer the regulation of this new type of legal practice license. APR 28 and associated regulations, setting forth the licensing requirements and scope of practice for LLLTs in the area of domestic relations, and rules covering ethical requirements for LLLT practice, were adopted in 2013, and the WSBA began administering this program and its policy board. In January 2017, the WSBA Board of Governors voted to include LLLTs within the WSBA membership. As of September 2017, the administration of LLLT admissions, licensing and continuing education will all be handled in one coordinated system with that of other WSBA members.

The WSBA Today

The WSBA operates under the delegated authority of the Washington Supreme Court to license the state's nearly 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 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. For more information, visit www.wsba.org.

As a regulatory agency, the WSBA administers the [bar admission process](#), including the lawyer bar exam and the licensing exams for LPOs and LLLTs; provides record-keeping and [licensing functions](#); and administers the [discipline system for licensed legal professionals](#). As a professional association, the WSBA provides [continuing legal education](#) for lawyers, LPOs and LLLTs, in addition to numerous other educational and member-service activities.

The Washington Supreme Court has adopted the current General Rule (GR) 12.1 (to be amended and renumbered to GR 12.2 as of September 1, 2017), which sets out the general purposes of the WSBA and specifies its authorized activities. The General Rule is incorporated into Article I of the WSBA Bylaws. The internal affairs of the WSBA, including its membership, governance, and operations, are established by the WSBA Bylaws.

The WSBA is a mandatory bar (also sometimes referred to as an “integrated” or “unified” bar), meaning that legal professionals licensed to practice in Washington are required to be members and pay an annual license fee, and that admission, regulation, and disciplinary functions are combined in one organization along with other activities to benefit WSBA members and the profession.

The WSBA is directed by the Board of Governors, the members of which are chosen through a combination of election by members, and election by other governors. The WSBA President, elected by the Board of Governors, and the Executive Director serve as the spokesperson for the Bar.

The Board of Governors selects the Executive Director, who runs the daily operations of the organization and manages a staff of approximately 145 WSBA employees who provide services to the WSBA's members, carry out the WSBA's regulatory and disciplinary functions under the supervision and oversight of the Washington Supreme Court, and provide support to the various groups of volunteers that work on Bar matters.