

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

PRO BONO AND PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE

June 14th, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Present: Michael Addams, Deborah Perluss, Yuan Ting, Bonnie Rosinbum, Natalie Reber, Erin Fortney, Sandy García, Jacquelyn (Jacqui) Merrill Martin

WSBA staff: Nicholas Mejía, Bonnie Sterken

BOG Liaison: Matthew Dresden

Absent: David Weafer, Ritu Jain, Tacy Gillespie, Thuy Nguyen

Meeting called to order at 1:06 pm

May Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve May Meeting minutes was made by Jacqui Merrill Martin, Sandy García seconded. Minutes were approved.

Subcommittee Updates

Communications/Technology Subcommittee –WSBA General Counsel gave approval to enable Cases/Opportunities feature on Pro Bono WA, so the subcommittee will consider whether to enable this feature moving forward. Anyone is welcome to join this subcommittee. Members of the subcommittee have at least one person in mind and looking for more attorneys in Washington State that are doing public service that may extend beyond just pro bono services for a Bar News article. If any potential candidates are known, please send the subcommittee members their contact information.

CLE Subcommittee – The Subcommittee met with Shanthi Raghu from the WSBA CLE Team and Riddhi Mukhopadhyay and Sara Mooney from Sexual Violence Law Center. The main role of the subcommittee is to offer support to the WSBA staff who will organize the Legal Lunchbox, and to the presenters with SVLC as needed. The Communications/Technology Subcommittee might be called on to spread the word about this CLE. The CLE Subcommittee meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. and is still accepting members.

Strategic Planning Subcommittee – This subcommittee did not meet. They currently do not have an exact answer on how to move forward with the committee yet and all monthly meetings have been paused. Discussed possibly hosting two large meetings at the beginning of the year to discuss purpose and goals and going from there going forward. This will be decided at the next Strategic Planning Subcommittee.

Rules & Policy Subcommittee – Deborah Perluss presented a proposed rule change to APR 1(e)(8) and led a discussion for the committee:

Proposed Rule Change to APR 1(e)(8) regarding QLSP definition

Deborah led the discussion about the memo with proposed changes to APR 1(e)(8). The Office of the

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Attorney General (AG) asked the WSBA to approve their in-house pro bono program, the Office of Military and Veteran Legal Aid (OMVLA) for QLSP status. The program is designated for veterans who need assistance and may primarily operate in Seattle. To qualify as a QLSP, as per the definition, the organization has to be a nonprofit whose primary service is to offer legal services to low-income individuals. The AG's office main purpose is not to do so, but the program within the AG's office is. Additionally, as a government agency, the AG/OMVLA does not qualify as a nonprofit entity. Some members of the committee stated they would like to accommodate the AG in their request and would like to expand the definition of a QLSP to allow governmental agencies who have specific programs catering to aiding low-income individuals to qualify. At the moment to the committee's knowledge the AG's office is the only government organization to have a program like this. The Pro Bono Council had general support of this matter, but their concern was expanding the definition may pull away some volunteers from QLSPs, particularly Thurston County Volunteer Lawyer Services, as employees of the AGO may instead choose to volunteer in-house. If the committee doesn't want to move forward, then the subcommittee doesn't have anything to add on this topic.

Natalie commented that QLSPs are subject to available grants, and it may not be good to have a government organization who has a more robust budgets to be included with a pool of non-profits, thus granting access to the same funds; QLSP designation was specific towards nonprofits originally. The Attorney General's Office is interested in having their attorneys obtain CLE credit through being a QLSP.

The Attorney General's program is established through statute, so funding should not be an issue for them. Jacqui noted that it may be beneficial that the Attorney General's program is in-house as they are more likely to get involved rather than having to reach out to an organization to volunteer and it can reduce barriers for access, which is consistent with the mission of our committee. Currently there are no other programs in existence for government agencies to become a QLSP, so this may open up doors for other govt agencies to become QLSPs.

Michael stated it could be argued prosecutors are public servants, so there may be wiggle room for prosecutors to become involved.

Currently there are only two organizations that provide legal services for veterans. Are there any other solutions to the Attorney General's office getting CLE credits for Pro Bono work without becoming a QLSP? Stated that it may be beneficial to specify what kinds of government organizations can have the QLSP designations in a definition. It was stated, "if the problem is the CLE credit, then maybe it is better to go to the CLE rules rather than redefine a QLSP". Discussed possibly creating a definition on a "Governmental Legal Service Provider", or "GLSP" aside from a QLSP to differentiate the pools of members of providers.

Natalie suggested to table the discussion, Deborah suggested that it may be beneficial to host a vote now. Michael made a motion to revisit the QLSP designation matter next month, Jacqui seconded, Yuan, Natalie, Erin, and Sandy voted in favor, Bonnie abstained, and Deborah voted against.

Michael said he will discuss the issue in the next OMVLA meeting and report back.

Proposed Community Engagement Plan

Michael suggested to vote to see if they can approve it so the Strategic Planning Subcommittee has

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something to review for one of their upcoming meetings. Jacqui asked for clarification before putting a suggestion to vote, clarified that October is the start of our calendar year. Jacqui expressed support for using this to have a guide for larger discussion and expressed concerned about the comprehensiveness of the plan.

Jacqui made a motion to approve the engagement plan as a framework for a starting point, development, initial for the strategic planning subcommittee to have a starting point. It was suggested that the verbiage for the motion be reworded.

“Motion to move this to strategic plan for action” by Michael Addams, Bonnie Rosinbum seconded, approved unanimously.

ATJ Board Liaison Updates

No ATJ liaison present at meeting today.

BOG Liaison Update

Matthew Dresden shared that the BOG is having an ETHOS meeting this Saturday discussing the possible restructuring of the WSBA. The next BOG meeting is in July in Tacoma, business as usual other than ETHOS. There is no plan yet at the moment; there are a series of meetings occurring with the purpose being answering the questions posed by the Supreme Court.

Announcements

August In-Person Meeting: Michael stated that Saleena is doing research for possible locations to host an event related to the August Committee meeting, with the possibility of the meeting being hybrid.

Meeting adjourned 1:59 pm