

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Washington Young Lawyers Committee

Washington Young Lawyers Committee | WSBA Office, Seattle, WA
Saturday, July 25, 2020 | 10:00 a.m. – 2:32 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

Present In-Person or Phone: Alixanne Pinkerton, Brian Holden, Brian Neuharth, Catherine Holm (left at lunch), Chelsie Elliott (joined at 10:17am), Emily Ann Albrecht, Esther Hyun, Jordan Lee Couch, Kim Sandher, Laura King, Paula Kurtz-Kreshel, Zachary Davison

Absent: Benjamin Hodges (unexcused), Brian Holt (unexcused), Ian McCurdy (unexcused), Maha Jafarey (unexcused), Molly M. Winston (unexcused)

WSBA Staff: Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant

Board of Governors (BOG): Governor Russell Knight (left at 10:35am)

Public: Efrain Hudnell

Welcome & Introductions

Jordan Couch, Washington Young Lawyers Committee (WYLC) Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. WYLC members introduced themselves and discussed events and exciting news since the last WYLC meeting.

Approval of May 2020 Meeting Minutes

On motion by WYLC Past Chair Kim Sandher and seconded by WYLC Member Catherine Holm, the WYLC by unanimous vote (12-0) approved the May 2020 meeting minutes.

BOG Updates & Discussions

Governor Russell Knight introduced himself as the At-large Governor on the Board of Governors (BOG) and BOG liaison to the WYLC. Governor Knight reported on BOG updates since the preceding WYLC meeting. He provided a summary of the most recent BOG meeting, explaining that there was not a lot of substance. The BOG voted to approve salary transparency to list on the WSBA website with generic titles and salary ranges with the intention of being transparent with where member's dollars are being spent, but not showing specific staff members' salaries for privacy reasons. Jordan asked if the BOG had any larger measures being pushed, or if they were holding the line due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Governor Knight responded that in person meetings take longer, as they engage with community, take lunch, and those items are not happening while doing virtual meetings which is enabling BOG to shorten their meetings overall. The BOG had proposed amending mission statement, then concluded that it was a rush to action, and since has been tabled indefinitely. Governor Knight clarified that the topic was not voted down, but that there will be no vote on it. Governor Knight does not anticipate any major

items coming up in the future. There is pressure on the BOG to ensure that not having a bar exam will only be during COVID; ultimately the decision is up to the Supreme Court. WYLC Member Emily Ann Albrecht asked Governor Knight to provide an overview of the “drama” going on with the board after seeing recent emails from President Mujumdar. Governor Knight explained that the primary content is from June meeting that Governor Carla Higginson made very inappropriate statements about minority bar associations and received a lot of blowback. The question is should the BOG take any action. The policy states for any accusation against sitting Governor, that the BOG is conflicted in taking action against them, and the Supreme Court recommends that an outside entity investigate and appoint appropriate action upon the Governor. Governor Knight confirmed that someone has been appointed, and that he anticipates action to be taken within one to two months’ time, which could be anywhere from public censorship of Governor Higginson’s comments up to removal. WYLC Chair-elect Brian Neuharth (Brian N.) asked Governor Knight on his opinion on the sundown of limited license legal technicians (LLLT) program and the diploma privilege. Governor Knight does not anticipate that Washington will have a LLLT program in the future, as the practice did not really work. The cost is astronomical for both the WSBA and the LLLTs, and there was not a lot of interest. The University of Washington no longer offers the LLLT educational program, which was the only school offering the classes required. There is not a supportable market for the program. There is hope to redirect funds from the LLLT program to other options for aiding low income population requiring legal assistance. WYLC Member Laura King asked if graduating students had the option of taking the bar exam. Governor Knight responded that this was correct and approximately 81 students are currently taking the summer exam as opposed to historical numbers of 600. The bar exam will be administered with social distancing guidelines in place, including staggered entrance times.

WSBA Updates

WSBA Member Services and Engagement (MSE) Manager and WYLC Staff Liaison Julianne Unite provided the following updates:

- **MSE Manager:** Julianne is now the MSE Manager and will be overseeing her original duties of new member programs, mentorship, rural outreach, insurance marketplace, in addition to the Sections Program, member benefits, and some practice management programs. WSBA will be hiring a new specialist to take over Julianne’s previous position. Julianne may not be attending WYLC meetings as regularly due to position change.
- **COVID-19 Task Force:** Kudos to Jordan and WYLC member/Chair-elect elect Emily Ann Albrecht for their contributions to the WSBA COVID-19 task force and drafting the Reopening Guide for Law Firms.
- **Bar Exam:** The 2020 bar exam will be held in two locations: Tacoma and Spokane with well thought-out plan for safety for both exam takers and staff. People are still taking the exam in person as they may not qualify for diploma privilege (only applies to graduates of accredited law schools), some job offerings are requiring the bar exam to be taken, and UBE requires it to transfer scores to other jurisdictions.
- **MentorLink Mixer:** The August 25 MentorLink Mixer has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. There is discussion and a potential goal of a virtual Mentor Link Mixer in the fall of

2020. Jordan asked if Efrain Hudnell would be interested in assisting with a Mentor Link program via Zoom and he responded that he would be very interested in helping.

- **At-Large BOG Seats:** WSBA Bylaws were amended this year to fill the At-large BOG seats through an election process. One of three of those seats is designated for new and young lawyers. The BOG used to appoint this person, but has since been changed to be elected by the membership. The first At-large Governor to be elected under this new process will be the Young Lawyer seat. Once there is an outline of how this process works, Julianne will update the WYLC.
- **WSBA CLE Opportunity:** The WSBA-CLE team has asked if anyone from the WYLC would be interested in putting on a virtual half-day program or could suggest speakers that normally wouldn't be accessible due to budget for in-person CLEs. Topics suggested were project management, team management, social media marketing and wellness topics. Jordan mentioned that Megan Zebaieh would be a great opportunity for an ethics speaker and that he would reach out.
- **Women's Voting Rights CLE:** The Legal Foundation of Washington (LFW) is asking if the WYLC would assist in marketing their upcoming CLE in September focusing on women's voting rights by using list serves and other contacts. LFW are not asking for speakers or financial support from the WYLC. WYLC Member Esther Hyun said that she supported the idea of WYLC assisting in marketing efforts for this topic. On motion by Jordan and seconded by Brian N., the WYLC by unanimous vote (12-0) agreed to support the LFW by assisting with marketing their CLE event.

New Appointments

Jordan reported that there are no new appointments at this meeting, but that they will be officially introduced and welcomed at their first meeting, which will be November 2020. They will also be invited to the September 2020 WYLC meeting.

Representative Reports and Ideas for COVID-19 Era

- WYLC Member Zachary Davison reported that it is hard to connect to people via Zoom, to the same extent that you would in person overall.
- WYLC Member Chelsie Elliott reported that COVID is still hampering things. She is encouraging people to attend the check-ins with the judges who provide information on what is happening and where we are going on a monthly basis. Chelsie said that approximate attendance from Clark County Bar is about 50 for these check-ins. She is still trying to connect and meet with newer attorneys so they feel connected to the WSBA. Jordan asked if the WYLC was able to help organize a mixer (similar to MentorLink Mixers) like a happy hour with guided conversations. Zachary responded that he thought this would be really appealing, but to limit break out rooms to no more than seven to keep things on focus. Jordan asked if WYLC should do statewide/local event, and Chelsie and Zachary responded both options would probably be popular. Brian N. asked how this would be marketed – Facebook advertisement? Jordan responded that it could be advertised similar to MentorLink Mixer. Esther suggested having different topics such as different legal careers and attracting younger attorneys interested in these paths with corresponding guest speakers. WYLC Member Paula Kurtz-Kreshel suggested that a draw may be

firms that are actively hiring, and discussing what they're interested in and going over their needs for positions that are available, but not via an actual hiring process. Julianne suggested possibly doing a hybrid CLE/mixer, with maybe a 30-minute CLE before the breakouts. Julianne said that WSBA could support this idea and there is a process/timeline in place that she could share with the WYLC on how long it takes to accomplish. Jordan asked if attendance was higher with CLE component, Julianne responded that based on CLE/MentorLink Mixer events in the past and survey feedback, attendance was not higher for events with a CLE. Jordan asked if anyone would like to take the lead on this idea/project – Esther responded that she would be happy to take this on. Jordan asked Efrain if he would like to join in with Esther, due to his connections with newer lawyers. Efrain said yes. Jordan, Esther, and Efrain will work with Julianne to plan and implement this mixer event.

Project Updates

- **ABA:** Emily reported on the ABA Annual Meeting being virtual this year and it will be no cost, accessible to all. She is excited that this is going to be free so that it is easier for people to access and to prepare better for future in-person meetings.
- **New Member Survey:** Julianne reported that the survey was sent to over 19,000 members, which included those who recently transitioned out of new membership. Internal staff team, including Julianne and WSBA Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant Chelle Gegax, as well as others at the WSBA are looking for trends within the survey results, and ways to present data summary. Julianne then highlighted some questions that may be of interest particularly to the WYLC. This information will be presented to the WYLC in a more digestible format for WYLC feedback in another meeting. Julianne also reported that we missed an opportunity in the survey to ask about potentially renaming the Young Lawyers to something more encompassing of the group. Emily asked if it was possible to do smaller scale survey regarding people's thoughts on the definition and further probing questions regarding types of emails people like to receive and their interactions with social media. Julianne said yes, to come up with a proposal, and use the survey data to support the proposal. Jordan suggested giving the option for members to vote for the rename of the WYLC to gain buy in.

Break for Lunch at 11:47am

Jordan called the meeting back to order at 12:32pm.

Project Updates (cont.)

- **Debt:** Brian N. reported that similar to legislature that was considered approximately 14 years, his project team drafted a proposed Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) bill for legislature. Brian N. also discussed a conversation about having state funds used for endowment. This draft bill is what would be sent to WSBA Legislative Committee. Other issues that will come up could be not requiring current attention are how to fund endowment, how to make up the committee. Other states are having difficulties in keeping the endowment funded.

For the purposes of today, Brian N. would like to submit the bill draft to the WSBA Legislative Committee, to keep this project moving, so that it can be put forward to the BOG and have any current issues addressed. On motion by Brian N., and seconded by Brian H., the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) approved sending a draft bill and resolution to WSBA for further review. Jordan suggested that the WYLC get involved with the WSBA and ask for a task force to be created to address issues with the student loan debt issue. Jordan further suggested having a minimum of three WYLC members on the task force, as this problem is having negative impacts on careers, access to justice, career availability, etc. Jordan also suggested that it would be easier to obtain buy in from the WSBA, by admitting that this is larger than the WYLC, and would be better accomplished in a team effort between the WYLC and WSBA. Jordan recommended having a focus group that would look to how to help resolve the debt issue for law students, including WYLC members, law school representatives, and BOG members. On motion by Jordan, and seconded by Kim, the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) approved a recommendation to the BOG that a task force be created comprised of three young lawyers, one WYLC member, and one member of each law school with a goal of reducing law school debt by approximately 50% in each category.

- **ATJ/RRR:** WYLC Member Alixanne Pinkerton reported that they had been working with WSBA stakeholder group working on rural outreach. Alixanne further reported that the group discussed challenges and positives of working in rural communities. Brian N. suggested an avenue of increasing availability of technology, such as e-filing, as a way to encourage more practice in rural areas. Jordan mentioned seeing if the ABA had any resources available that may help, flagged to WYLC members who attending the ABA annual meeting to see if there are others who are also working on this same type of project. Julianne reported that the one of the highest needs communicated by practitioners the WSBA spoke to from the rural counties spoke to was family law.
- **Bylaws & Charter:** Paula reported that she liked the idea of putting out a name change via a survey to support an efforts of a more inclusive name for the WYLC. Kim asked that rather than changing the name, focusing on explaining what the WYLC is and that it means “young” in career, not necessarily age, and perhaps having a mission statement that would advertise that better. Paula said that getting rid of the age restriction would be less discriminating. Jordan commented that outside feedback dictates more toward changing the definition. Kim commented that if the goal is inclusivity, then it should be considered to change name and definition. Jordan proposed to email quarterly contact recipients to pull feedback regarding suggestions for new name of the WYLC. Zachary moved to amend the WSBA Bylaws to 1) remove the age requirement and 2) change the admission to practice restriction of “any jurisdiction” to Washington state. Kim Seconded and Esther opposed. Discussion occurred regarding the “Washington state” restriction. Esther reported that it feels that opening up to Washington limits attorneys who are trying to represent and serve. Kim commented that because Washington is very different than a lot of other states, even seasoned attorneys will need a place for resources and they would still be considered as new to their career IN Washington. Julianne recommended bringing all Bylaws amendments to the BOG at once. On

motion by Kim and seconded by Paula, the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) approved tabling this discussion until the next WYLC meeting.

- **Dress Code:** Jordan reported on the dress code proposal based on existing rule, which addresses the needs for courts and judges to update themselves and have gender neutral dress codes and requirements. Jordan asked for feedback on the proposal. Brian N. asked why social and economic status are included. Jordan replied that the WSBA Diversity Committee stated that a lesser styled suit may imply lesser class or have comments from judges. Emily responded that the proposal was great as-is and they should move forward. On motion by Brian N. and seconded by Kim, the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) approved submitting the dress code proposal to the appropriate WSBA group for further review.
- **Awards:** Julianne reported that the nomination materials for the Public Service Leadership Award were redacted in the meeting materials. In total, the WYLC received nine nominees. Julianne then read aloud a redacted letter of support for nominee #3 that was sent post-application deadline. The WYLC then decided to ask each member to vote for their top four nominees and those results were as follows: Nominee #1: 10 votes, Nominee #2: eight votes, Nominee #3: eight votes, Nominee #4: two votes, Nominee #5: nine votes, Nominee #6: one vote, Nominee #7: five votes, Nominee #8: one vote, Nominee #9: zero votes. On motion by Emily and seconded by Brian N., the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) awarded the PSLA nominees # 1, 2, 3, 5.

FY20 WYLC Annual Report

Jordan stated that the annual report is not finished. Julianne reported that final draft is due to WSBA by Aug. 21. On motion by Kim, seconded by Emily, and abstentions by Jordan and Brian N. the WYLC by majority vote (9-0-2) approved to have Jordan and Brian N. draft the annual report.

FY21 Meeting Dates

Julianne reported that the July WYLC meeting is typically scheduled to coincide with the July BOG meeting, but the BOG dates and locations for FY21 have not yet been set. Proposed dates for FY21 (Oct. 1, 2020-September 30, 2021) WYLC meetings follow current practice of every other second Saturday of the month starting in November, with the caveat that we may not be able to physically meet in-person due to COVID restrictions. Brian N. asked if anyone has any issues with meeting set up, time, etc. Emily responded that she appreciates productivity of today's meeting (as an example) it is not the same experience as in person and people would participate in a more genuine way if it were in person. Brian N. responded that he is also in favor of doing in person meetings and shares same sentiments as Emily. Julianne will communicate FY21 dates to newly appointed WYLC members with locations as TBD, and Zoom will be available at all meetings moving forward. Brian N. asked if dates were able to be changed in the future if voted on by WYLC. Julianne replied yes, but some restrictions may have different requirements due to the Open Public Meetings Act and that this could be discussed in more detail in the future, if needed. On motion by Brian N. and seconded by Jordan, the WYLC by unanimous vote approved the proposed WYLC meeting schedule for FY21.

Rapid Eval: New Projects

- **Employment support:** Jordan reported that he was hoping to discuss employment support for lawyers new to the profession during current economy and COVID, as well as employment in general. This topic did not make today's agenda, so it will be added to the agenda for September.
- **Black Lives Matter:** Esther asked about discussing Black Lives Matter and systemic racism in the legal community. Kim responded that the BOG has created an equity and injustice work group with representatives from minority bar associations, and that she could ask if a WLYC representative should be a part of this committee.
- **Other:** Jordan asked for any further agenda items for September, no responses.

Adjournment

On motion by Esther and seconded by Kim, the WYLC by unanimous vote (11-0) adjourned the meeting at 2:32 p.m.