

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Board of Governors January 2024 Meeting Update

A summary prepared by the WSBA of the Board of Governors (Board) meeting held virtually Jan. 12-13, 2024, virtually. The agenda, materials, and video recording from this Board meeting are [online](#). The next regular meeting is March 7-8, 2024, in Spokane. 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.

NEED TO KNOW

Support for Bar Licensure Task Force Recommendations

After a robust discussion, and in consideration of member feedback from a recent listening session, the Board voted to support the [Bar Licensure Task Force's recommendations to the Washington Supreme Court](#). These recommendations include creating alternatives to the bar exam and amendments to the rules and timing of the character and fitness process. ([Learn more in the November issue of Washington State Bar News](#).) Supporting comments indicated that, while the Task Force's recommendations are not perfect and their success will depend on implementation, they are necessary to address historic, systemic problems with the bar exam and other licensing requirements. The Board's letter of support to the Task Force and the Court suggests that the recommendations be carried out in a manner equitable to those who have already completed the requirements of the APR 6 Law Clerk Program. Because the Board had previously taken the stance that the bar exam should remain a requirement for admission, their deliberations were preceded by a vote to rescind a [2021 resolution](#).

Member Well-Being Task Force

The Board established a Member Well-Being Task Force. This task force will help carry out the Board's strategic priority to study member well-being and expand and improve resources to support legal professionals. Task force members will review national reports (such as the Institute for Well-Being in Law's "[The Path to Lawyer Wellbeing: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change](#)") and best practices, analyze data from current WSBA programs, and directly survey a vast range of members across Washington state. The task force expects this work to take two years, after which they will issue a final report to the Board with recommendations to improve well-being within the Washington legal profession. ([See page 301](#))

Member Status Work Group

The Board also established a Member Status Work Group. This work group is being formed in response to requests from members who are retiring or otherwise leaving the legal profession and want a license status other than “voluntarily resigned.” The requests are usually for something akin to a “retired” status that carries no annual fees but may, among other things, allow the practitioner to continue to participate in bar activities and volunteer opportunities and/or maintain an inactive license and/or give legal advice just to family and friends. Some believe the status “voluntarily resigned” does not honor the dignity of retirement after a long career. The work group will evaluate current license status options, speak with stakeholders to understand their concerns, and make a recommendation to the Board by the end of the current fiscal year. Before adopting, the Board revised the proposed charter to add at least one member who is known to support the creation of a “retirement” or similar license status. ([See page 256.](#))

WSBA’s In-Progress Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Leaders of the WSBA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Council talked about their initiative to update the bar’s decennial Diversity and Inclusion Plan, which is part of the larger strategic goal to improve the experience of belonging among legal professionals. To guide the plan, the DEI Council will use the comprehensive membership demographic study that was launched last year and set to finish this spring. The DEI Council and consultants at the Institute for the Inclusion in the Legal Profession will also be reaching out to key groups in the coming months to inform the drafting of a new Diversity, Equity Inclusion plan to present to the Board in September 2024. The DEI Council leaders asked the Board to consider what DEI should look like in the legal community and how we create accountability in the plan.

The Board also:

- Heard from Access to Justice Board members about their major focus areas and accomplishments. ([See the Access to Justice Board’s annual report at page 25.](#))
- Heard a presentation from Hon. Samuel Chung, President of the Superior Court Judges Association.
- Went through its annual anti-harassment training. ([See page 321.](#))
- Revised two fiscal policies. ([See page 267.](#))