

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Board of Governors September 2023 Meeting Update

A summary prepared by the WSBA of the Board of Governors (Board) meeting held Sept. 8-9, 2023, in Spokane. The agenda, materials, and video recording from this Board meeting are [online](#). The next regular meeting is Nov. 2-3, 2023, in Seattle. The Board is 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](mailto:barleaders@wsba.org).

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### NEED TO KNOW

**2025 License Fees and 2024 Budget.** The Board adopted the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, including the Keller deduction schedule. The budget maintains programs and services while purposefully using a portion of available reserves to maintain the 2024 license fee at current levels. ([See page 109.](#)) Looking ahead, the Board will recommend to the Washington Supreme Court that all license fees remain stable, with no increase, for Fiscal Year 2025. The Client Protection Board assessment, however, will revert to the rate of \$20; it was temporarily lowered to \$15 for the past two years because of a healthy fund balance. ([See page 199.](#))

**Swearing-In of New Governors and Officers.** President Daniel D. Clark passed the gavel to incoming President Hunter M. Abell to begin the new fiscal year. Justice Debra Stephens also swore in Tom Ahearne, Todd Bloom, Kristina Larry, Allison Widney, and Matthew Dresden (continuing) to begin their new term on the Board of Governors. The full slate of incoming officers sworn-in comprises President Hunter Abell, President-Elect Sunitha Anjilvel, Immediate-Past President Dan Clark, and continuing Treasurer Francis Adewale. Learn more about these WSBA leaders in October's *Bar News*. Governors who concluded their terms, to much applause and thanks, were Lauren Boyd, Erik Kaeding, Brett Purtzer, and Alec Stephens. Outgoing Immediate-Past President Hon. Brian Tollefson, who served as FY22 President, was also honored for his service.

**Changes and Alternatives to the Bar Exam.** Much of the meeting was devoted to learning about changes and opportunities in the professional pipeline (see below). Watch your mailbox for an upcoming issue of *Bar News* with more information and

about the Bar Licensure Task Force's proposal for bar-exam alternatives and the NextGen bar exam set to replace the current bar exam in July 2026.

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## **OTHER BUSINESS**

**Local Hero and Presidential Commendation.** The WSBA recognized [Jenaé Ball as a Local Hero](#), an honor bestowed by the WSBA President in partnership with county bar associations to recognize colleagues who make noteworthy contributions to their communities. Jenaé was nominated by the Spokane County Bar Association for her tremendous leadership and service, leading the county bar through the pandemic and championing its mission to address systemic racism in the justice system. WSBA President Dan Clark also gave a special commendation to Milt Rowland, a highly regarded retired adjunct professor at Gonzaga School of Law known for his wit, humor, and vast experience.

**Annual Report from Law School Deans & APR RULE 6 (Law Clerk) Program:** The Board heard updates from the deans from the University of Washington School of Law, Seattle University School of Law, Gonzaga University School of Law, and the University of Idaho School of Law. In addition, the Board also heard from a representative from the [APR Rule 6 Law Clerk Board](#). All participants answered questions from the Board of Governors regarding the current state of education of law students coming into our profession. They spoke about the trends, opportunities, enrollment data, and priorities in legal education on their campuses and across the nation. Hot topics included [the record-breaking size and diversity of 1L classes](#), [the trend of boycotting national law-school rankings](#), [innovative programs](#), [opportunities for hands-on education and experiences](#), and the cost of law school.

**The Professional Pipeline and Bar Exam Changes.** Representatives from the National Conference of Bar Examiners presented regarding the plan to sunset the current bar exam and launch the [NextGen bar exam](#) in July 2026. The NextGen exam content and structure is meant to better test applicants on skills and knowledge they need to be successful in real-world practice. ([See page 237.](#)) The conversation then shifted to a closely related topic, possible alternative pathways to licensure being considered by the [Washington Bar Licensure Task Force](#). Task Force co-chairs Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis and Seattle University Law School Dean Tony Varona spoke regarding their work studying and developing a soon-to-be released proposal recommending several ways for bar applicants to demonstrate competence to practice, other than the bar exam. Both co-chairs noted that their primary focus in lawyer licensure is public safety, and it has been eye-opening to learn that research shows the traditional bar exam is not an especially reliable instrument in protecting the public. The final report is expected to be ready this fall, with a public rollout and engagement plan to follow.

**Legal Foundation of Washington (LFW) Annual Report.** In 2022, LFW invested more than \$13 million in grants to Washington's legal aid system, including more

than \$2.5 million in COVID 19-related emergency grants in partnership with King County and the Office of Civil Legal Aid. As a result, more than 27,000 families received free one-on-one legal services for help with urgent legal concerns, and hundreds of thousands of people benefited from advocacy to address systemic injustice and root causes of poverty. The LFW was established by the Washington Supreme Court in 1984 to distribute funds from the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts to support civil legal aid organizations throughout the state. To learn more about the LFW and its work last year, read the entire annual report. ([See page 448.](#))

**The Board also:**

- Continued its discussion to develop strategic priorities for the coming fiscal year and beyond. ([See page 325.](#))
- Approved the Washington State Bar Foundation's 2024 Board of Trustees roster and heard about the Foundation's work to increase access to justice, pro bono work, and diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. ([See page 5.](#))
- Approved a process and instrument to evaluate the Executive Director's performance in Fiscal Year 2023. ([See page 439.](#))