



# WASHINGTON NEW MEMBERS COMMITTEE

## Washington New Members Committee

Washington New Members Committee Meeting | Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Monday, May 18, 2026, | 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

[Via Teams](#) | Meeting ID: 277 071 348 516 87 | Passcode: R2Z7FE9x

### AGENDA:

1. **Welcome & Introductions; Approval of March Meeting Minutes** – Alex
2. **WSBA Updates** –Chelle, Jordan
  - a. **Wellness Report Debrief** – Alex
3. **July Meeting Update** – Chelle, Alex
4. **Team Updates and Regional Reports** – All
  - a. **Social Media** – Ariel
  - b. **Mentorship Project Team** – Janta
  - c. **CLE Team** – Chawisa, Hanna
  - d. **PSLA Team** – Alex
  - e. **Charter Project Team** – Alex
    - i. **Updated Draft Proposal; Implementation Discussion**
5. **July Bar Exam Social** - Chelle
6. **Priority Projects Discussion** – Alex; *Time Permitting*
7. **New ideas for Next Meeting** – All

**Adjournment** – Alex

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Washington New Members Committee

**Washington New Members Committee Meeting**  
**Microsoft Teams**  
**Monday, April 20, 2026, | 12:05 p.m. – 1:04 p.m.**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**WNMC Members Present:** Alexander Reaganson, Chawisa Laicharoenwat, Mackenzie Lloyd, Janta Steele (arrived 12:29 p.m.), Ariel Cook (arrived 12:09), Steven Brown, Matthew Rommelmann, Hanna Harrison, Mason Ji

**WNMC Members Absent:** Bethany Nolan (unexcused), Thomas Garvey (unexcused), Makenzie Spinks (unexcused), Stephan Yhann (unexcused), Fatima Al-Rikabi (unexcused), Michelle Hesse (unexcused)

**Board of Governors Liaison:** Jordan Couch – arrived 12:09 p.m.

**WSBA Staff:** Chelle Gegax – WSBA Member Services and Engagement Staff Liaison, Vanessa Sweeney – WSBA Member Services and Engagement Program Coordinator

## Welcome & Introductions; Approval of March Meeting Minutes – Alex

WNMC Chair Alexander Reaganson, opened the meeting at 12:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. On motion by WNMC Member Hanna Harrison, seconded by WNMC Member Matt Rommelman, the WNMC approved the March WNMC Meeting minutes (8-0-0).

## WSBA Updates – Chelle, Jordan

WSBA Member Services and Engagement Staff Liaison Chelle Gegax noted that the first WSBA virtual volunteer fair and gave a shout out to Alex for attending and representing WNMC and the Pro Bono and Public Service Committee. Alex shared an update about the WNMC's plan to attend the May Board of Governors meeting to discuss the new charter. After feedback from the WSBA Office of General Counsel (OGC), WSBA Finance, and WSBA's Equity and Justice team, it was determined to bring back to the WNMC to do a second draft. Chelle added that there is still have meeting space in Wenatchee and the WNMC is still invited to dinner with BOG and the Local Heroes Luncheon. Chelle added that the WNMC would lose money if it is moved at this point, and Alex decided the WNMC hybrid meeting will remain scheduled for May 2. It was decided to reschedule the New Member Social that was originally scheduled for May 2, after the WNMC meeting, to another date.

WNMC BOG Liaison Jordan Couch shared items from the upcoming BOG meeting agenda, scheduled to take place May 1-2. An important topic on the upcoming agenda is a proposal to change who is allowed to sit for the Washington bar exam. Currently, Washington requires bar applicants to have graduated from an ABA-accredited law school, a rule that has drawn criticism because ABA accreditation has historically increased law school costs and created inequities. At the same time, Washington does *not* require ABA accreditation for someone to practice law in the state if they are already licensed elsewhere,

creating an inconsistency where graduates of non-ABA-accredited schools may practice in Washington after being licensed for a year in certain other states but still cannot take Washington's own bar exam. The proposed rule change would close that loophole by allowing graduates of *any* law school approved by *any* state to sit for the Washington bar exam. This development is expected to be particularly relevant to new lawyers and future bar applicants.

Chelle mentioned that the WSBA Mock Trial will take place on May 9th, and there are still openings for committee members interested in volunteering as jurors. Chelle also noted that last week's TAP Social anticipated 60 guests, but only 25 attended, all of whom came from the seminar.

### FY27 Budget Update – Alex

Chelle confirmed that the FY27 budget is still under review with WSBA staff, and that the full FY27 budget review is not on the BOG's agenda until September.

### Team Updates and Regional Reports – All

Alex asked whether any WNMC members had regional updates to report; no updates were provided.

#### Social Media – Ariel

WNMC Member Ariel Cook explained that social media analytics show stagnation: although follower count is still increasing, growth has slowed, and overall reach has dropped because fewer posts are appearing in users' feeds. Daily views decreased from the hundreds to as low as four on some days, which is reflected in the report already available in the shared WNMC Teams folder. Ariel also noted previously sending an email requesting spotlight interview information but received only one response. To stay on schedule with these posts, Ariel requested everyone to send in their spotlight details so the committee can build a backlog and avoid delays. Ariel confirmed that Hanna also has the necessary login credentials, and the team is strong enough to minimize disruptions moving forward.

#### Mentorship Project Team – Janta

The mentorship discussion centers on planning a series of upcoming "lunch and learn" sessions, which are still in their early stages due to delays in securing a speaker and confirming logistics. Chelle reported that although they initially hoped to launch the first session by late next week, the date cannot yet be confirmed. The group is still searching for an available speaker and welcomes any leads. WNMC Member Janta Steele mentioned that the team is awaiting confirmation from WSBA regarding whether a high-profile speaker, someone whose participation may require permission to promote an upcoming book can be approved. Chelle noted that she will discuss this with Julianne, but decisions may involve additional stakeholders and will not be resolved immediately.

As the team considers promotional needs, Janta asks whether any visual materials are available. Ariel confirmed that none currently exists. Janta proposes releasing an initial promotional graphic without dates to raise awareness of the upcoming series in May, June, and July; however, Chelle strongly advises that marketing is far more effective when anchored to confirmed dates. Chelle added that their design team can support the project but would need solid dates before producing materials. Because effective

promotion ideally requires six to eight weeks, she expresses concern that a May launch is no longer feasible.

Discussion gradually shifts to delaying the sessions entirely. Janta suggests that holding three events during summer months may be impractical, since students are often unavailable or busy with finals. Chelle agrees, explaining that pushing the sessions to fall might be advantageous: they could better align with law school schedules, improve attendance, and provide adequate time for marketing and speaker coordination. Planning for early September emerges as a strong option, but the exact timing depends on student availability. Chelle offers to reach out to law school contacts for accurate scheduling information.

Hanna added that law school academic calendars likely have a good window after Labor Day, the week of September 14, which would maximize attendance for both students and early-career lawyers, who also constitute a key audience. The conversation then turns briefly to finding an appropriate 45 minutes lunchtime window. After agreeing that the finer details (such as exact dates, lunch-hour timing, and multi-month planning for subsequent sessions in October and November) can be handled by email, the WNMC concluded in agreement to delay the mentorship sessions to fall, tentatively targeting mid-September for the first event, and coordinating further logistics asynchronously.

CLE Team – Chawisa, Hanna

WNMC Member Chawisa Laicharoenwat confirmed that the next Financial Focus is scheduled for September. Hanna mentioned that in working to secure presenters for an upcoming CLE, the expert witness organization they were looking to partner with fell through because the group typically uses promotional videos, which are not allowed under WSBA guidelines. Chelle reached out to the Criminal Law Section and is still waiting for a follow-up but is aware they remain interested. If needed, the team may also reach out to other presenters who have covered this subject in the past. Hanna noted it would be valuable to have representation from both the civil and criminal perspectives—ideally with a civil presenter and, if confirmed, a criminal law attorney from the section—so that the program includes multiple speakers and a balanced viewpoint.

Charter Project Team – Alex

Notes from WSBA; Updated Draft Proposal

The charter discussion begins with Alex outlining the standard review process for any document heading to the BOG, explaining that proposed charters or amendments undergo review by WSBA, OGC, the equity team, and the finance team. While financial reviewers asked only minor questions about potential long-term program costs, OGC focused primarily on structural issues within the charter, noting that overly specific activities could “hamstring” the committee by requiring future amendments for even small changes. In response, Alex adjusted the charter by removing activity-level detail and converting some activities into broader objectives, while also revising certain wording—such as replacing references to student loan repayment with a more general emphasis on transition-to-practice and practical skills development—to avoid locking the committee into narrow issue areas. The WNMC then reviewed each goal, including data-driven analysis, advocacy for new members, mentorship and networking initiatives, pro bono engagement, and CLE or leadership development. Janta raised questions about differences

between two goal areas—Grow and Connect versus CLEs and engagement—and Alex proposed reorganizing objectives, moving mentorship under professional development and consolidating section liaison roles and networking under Grow and Connect. The committee expressed general agreement. Discussion then shifted to meeting expectations within the charter. Alex explained that reviewers cautioned against language directing the BOG to meet with the committee, as the BOG ultimately decides whether such interactions occur. Chelle emphasized that binding future committees to specifics like monthly meetings or quarterly hybrid sessions could be problematic, as schedules and needs evolve over time; she also shared that similar charters (such as the STAR Council’s) give the chair full authority to set meeting cadence. Some members, including WNMC Member Matt Rommelmann, valued the current monthly meeting structure but acknowledged that locking it into a charter could create unnecessary rigidity. This prompted consideration of removing the entire meeting-expectations section from the charter. Alex noted that a separate charter team meeting would be scheduled to refine these unresolved elements. Finally, the group reviewed updates to the planned at-large seats, noting feedback from OGC and the equity team encouraging clearer role definitions and a more inclusive title—favoring “pro bono and public service representative” over the more limited “QLSP public service representative.” Chelle highlighted the need to develop transparent eligibility criteria for these seats, which Alex acknowledged had not yet been drafted. With major revisions summarized and next steps identified, Alex concluded that the charter project team would meet again before the next full WNMC meeting to continue refining the document.

### Priority Projects Discussion – Alex; Time Permitting

### New Ideas for Next Meeting – All

None.

### Adjournment

Alex adjourned the meeting at 1:04 p.m.

*Some material in this document was generated using Microsoft Copilot and was reviewed and modified by Vanessa Sweeney, WSBA Member Services and Engagement.*

WASHINGTON STATE  
BAR ASSOCIATION



# WSBA Member Well-Being Task Force: Final Report

PRESENTED TO THE WSBA BOARD OF GOVERNORS – MAY 2026



**WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION**

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# Acknowledgments

This compilation of work would not be possible without the dedicated contributions of the members of the WSBA Member Well-Being Task Force.

## THANK YOU TO ALL OF THE CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS.

NAME	POSITION
<b>Justin Bingham</b>	<i>Chair and WSBA Member</i>
<b>Emily Arneson</b>	<i>WSBA Member</i>
<b>Melissa Berry</b>	<i>WSBA Member</i>
<b>Darcel Lobo</b>	<i>WSBA Member</i>
<b>Bushra Rahim</b>	<i>WSBA Member</i>
<b>Kyle Sciuchetti</b>	<i>WSBA Member</i>
<b>Judge Michael Finkle, J.D., M.B.A.</b>	<i>Judicial Member</i>
<b>Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis</b>	<i>WA Supreme Court Justice</i>
<b>Susan Lee, Ph.D.</b>	<i>Public Member</i>
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<b>Sara Smucker Barnwell, Ph.D., M.Ed</b>	<i>Public Member</i>
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<b>Kevin Plachy, J.D., M.B.A., CWP</b>	<i>Staff Liaison</i>
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<b>Nam Nguyen</b>	<i>Board of Governors Liaison</i>
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# Executive Summary

This Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) Well-Being Task Force (WBTF) Final Report provides a comprehensive roadmap for improving the well-being of Washington legal professionals.<sup>1</sup>

Formed in January 2024, the WBTF was charged with identifying systemic challenges and recommending actionable strategies aligned with national standards such as *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being*.<sup>2</sup>

Drawing on findings from eight specialized workgroups and the WSBA Well-Being Survey (WBS), the final report highlights widespread stress, burnout, and mental health concerns across the profession. Lawyers in private practice and government roles report the highest levels of strain, while early-career lawyers face compounded challenges from heavy workloads, imposter syndrome, and significant law school debt.

Alarming, ten percent of survey respondents disclosed suicidal thoughts in the past year, and twenty percent expressed concern about alcohol use. Despite the availability of well-being resources, fewer than half of WSBA members have utilized them, citing stigma, confidentiality fears, and lack of awareness.

Legal professionals from communities that have historically been excluded from the profession experience even greater stress and burnout, often compounded by microaggressions and underrepresentation. Judges face unique stressors, including isolation, decision fatigue, and security threats, while cultural norms in the legal profession discourage help-seeking.

## FIVE RECOMMENDATION THEMES EMERGED ACROSS THE WORKGROUPS:

- 1 Normalize help-seeking** through clear, repeated communications and leadership modeling that reduce stigma and make it safe to use support without fear of disciplinary consequences.
- 2 Expand education and training**, including no- or low-cost continuing legal education programs (CLEs) and practical skills such as Mental Health First Aid, trauma-informed practice, boundary setting, and productivity as well-being.
- 3 Improve access to resources and protect confidentiality** by offering anonymous, easy-to-find referral directories; extending after-hours/telehealth options; and forging partnerships (e.g., gym/well-being discounts) that meet members where they are.
- 4 Build connection and mentoring at scale** — from structured mentorship for new lawyers and judges to peer support networks and small-group communities that reduce isolation, especially in solo/small practice and rural benches.
- 5 Pursue structural and policy reforms** like reasonable caseload/workload standards, court

C O N T I N U E D >

1. The term *legal professionals* encompasses judicial officers, lawyers, and law students.

2. Nat'l Task Force on Law. Well-Being, *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change* (2017), [https://instwellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/path\\_to\\_lawyer\\_well\\_being.pdf](https://instwellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/path_to_lawyer_well_being.pdf).

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and regulatory updates (e.g., well-being aligned rules/comments), and an employer Well-Being Pledge—to align incentives with sustainable practice.

A complete, at-a-glance list of recommendations appears in the Summary of Recommendations in [Appendix B](#).

The path forward requires collaboration among WSBA, courts, law schools, employers, and affinity groups to measure progress. Above all, leadership must drive a cultural shift that treats well-being as integral to professional competence and ethical practice. By embracing these recommendations, Washington can lead the nation in creating a legal profession where well-being is not aspirational but foundational.

**By embracing these recommendations, Washington can lead the nation in creating a legal profession where well-being is not aspirational but foundational.**

# Introduction to Findings and Recommendations

## Purpose and Scope

The WSBA established the Taskforce in January 2024 with a clear mandate: to advance the well-being of Washington’s legal professionals by identifying systemic challenges and recommending actionable strategies. The Charter emphasizes alignment with national standards, including *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being*,<sup>3</sup> and recognizes that the well-being of legal professionals is essential to both competent and ethical practice. The WSBA Board of Governors (BOG) adopted member well-being as an organizational priority in November 2023, underscoring the importance of this work.<sup>4</sup>

This report represents the culmination of the Task Force’s efforts and is presented to the BOG at the conclusion of the Taskforce’s term in March 2026. It synthesizes findings and recommendations from eight specialized workgroups, each focused on a distinct area of concern, and provides a roadmap for improving well-being across the legal profession in Washington.

## Structure and Methodology

The WBTF is committed to advancing the well-being of legal professionals, not only at the individual level, but also through systemic reforms within legal institutions that adversely affect professional health. To support this mission, the WBTF established eight workgroups covering a wide range of legal professionals and topics.

Four workgroups focused on distinct areas of legal practice: the Law Students and New Members Workgroup, Private Practice Workgroup, Government

and Public Interest Workgroup, and Judiciary Workgroup. Two workgroups addressed critical issues impacting the profession: the Suicide and Addiction Workgroup and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup. Two additional workgroups concentrated on bar association and regulatory matters: the Member Wellness Program Workgroup and the Rules and Regulatory Workgroup. Collectively, these workgroups provide a comprehensive framework for promoting well-being and fostering meaningful change across the legal community.

Each workgroup conducted research, reviewed relevant literature, and engaged stakeholders to identify challenges and propose solutions. Some work groups supplemented their analysis with targeted surveys to capture perspectives unique to their focus area. This report consolidates those findings and recommendations into a unified document, structured to present findings first, followed by actionable recommendations for each area.

## Survey Context

A cornerstone of the WBTF’s work was the WSBA Member Well-Being Survey ([Appendix C](#)), developed and deployed by the Member Survey Workgroup between late 2024 and early 2025. The survey was administered by the National Business Research Institute (NBRI) from January 28 to February 20, 2025, in collaboration with Professor Matthew S. Thiese of the

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3. [National Task Force on Lawyer Well Being](#) (2017) *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change*. American Bar Association.  
4. WSBA Well-Being Task Force Charter, 2024.01.12; Retrieve here: [member-well-being-task-force-charter.pdf](#).

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University of Utah School of Medicine. Professor Thiese attended workgroup meetings, actively contributed to the development of survey questions alongside Task Force members, and assisted with interpreting results and conducting demographic segmentation analysis. The Task Force does not claim statistical causality or correlation when discussing the results of the segment analyses. Further research and analysis of each segment would be necessary to draw those statistical determinations.

The survey achieved 903 responses (approximately 9% response rate) from a proportional sample of WSBA members across Washington, yielding a 99.8% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. This robust dataset provided critical insights into the well-being of Washington's legal professionals and informed the Task Force's recommendations. The survey also included segmentation analysis across practice settings, career stages, and demographics, revealing unique stressors for solo practitioners, government lawyers, and new members.

These findings underscore systemic challenges in workload, workplace culture, and access to support. Relevant findings from the survey will be referenced throughout the report in each workgroup section to provide context and support for recommendations.

Supplemental surveys conducted by other workgroups explored domain-specific issues; however, these should not be conflated with the primary survey administered in partnership with NBRI and Professor Thiese. Where applicable, results from the supplemental surveys will be discussed in the relevant workgroup section.



## KEY FINDINGS

### Stress and Burnout

Nearly **58%** of respondents reported feeling burned out regularly or occasionally, with **8.8%** experiencing burnout daily. Rates were highest among new members (**80%**) and lawyers in medium and large firms (**64.2%**).

### Mental Health and Suicidal Ideation

**15.7%** reported persistent feelings of depression, and **56.8%** experienced anxiety symptoms. Alarming, **9.9%** disclosed suicidal thoughts or actions in the past year, with most attributing these to workplace factors.

### Workload Pressures

The majority worked 40–59 hours per week, with new members and large-firm lawyers reporting significantly longer hours. **66.9%** experienced stress from billable hour expectations, and **36.5%** were expected to be available outside work hours regularly.

### Financial Stressors

**77.1%** graduated with student loan debt, and over half reported that debt negatively impacted mental well-being. Among new members, **46.1%** carried debt exceeding \$150,000.

### Resource Utilization

Despite high stress levels, only **43.5%** had used WSBA well-being resources, with stigma and lack of awareness cited as barriers.

# Law Students and Lawyer Practice Type

## Law Student and New Member Workgroup

Susan Lee (Chair), Bushra Rahim,  
Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis,  
Gerald Heppler, Phillip Lentz, Adely Ruiz

### Overview

The Law Student and New Member Workgroup's approach incorporates a thorough review of existing research, new data collection via targeted outreach, and the formulation of actionable recommendations. As part of its research, the workgroup reviewed national and institutional studies. The full listing of literature reviewed can be found in [Appendix F](#).

### WSBA Well-Being Survey Insights

Results for New Member respondents were segmented and compared to the responses for all respondents (general legal population). The analysis revealed significant well-being challenges for the New Member population compared to the general legal population:

- **Higher Workload:** New Member respondents reported billing 31-40 hours per week at a rate of **18.4%**, compared to **11.9%** of the general legal population. For 41-50 hours/week, **15.4%** of New Member respondents fell into this category compared to **6.3%** of the general legal population.
- **More Frequent Worry Over Billable Hours:** **30.4%** of New Member respondents reported worrying about billable hours daily, compared to **15.3%** of the general legal population.

- **Significantly Higher Law School Debt:** **46.1%** of New Member respondents reported graduating with more than **\$150,000** in law school debt, compared to only **14.9%** of the general legal population.

These results indicate an outsized burden on new lawyers, compounding the stressors identified in the literature and reinforcing the urgency of targeted well-being interventions.

### Supplemental Survey Questions and Purpose

The survey aimed to identify key wellness challenges and opportunities in the legal field. The survey was also distributed to new practitioners within the broader WSBA community. We received 24 responses. Each question's rationale and purpose were discussed at length among workgroup members:

#### 1. What does wellness mean to you?

Purpose: To establish a baseline understanding of how participants perceive wellness.

#### 2. Do the available wellness services seem approachable? Why or why not?

Purpose: To evaluate accessibility and stigma surrounding existing wellness and mental health services.

#### 3. Are there barriers preventing you from using wellness services?

Purpose: To identify obstacles, including work/office culture, billable hours demand precluding regular use of wellness services, and systemic expectations.

#### 4. Has utilizing wellness services improved your performance as a student or practitioner? How?

Purpose: To determine if wellness services have a measurable impact on performance and resilience.

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### 5. How could the legal field better embrace your definition of wellness?

Purpose: To explore cultural and structural changes that could enhance well-being by expanding traditional definitions of wellness.

## Supplemental Survey Distribution and Results

A link to the supplemental survey was shared with key stakeholders and specific individuals within our target demographic. Specifically, the survey went to law students from Gonzaga Law, Seattle University School of Law, and the University of Washington School of Law.

### KEY INSIGHTS:

- Wellness defined as balance, mental clarity, and self-care
- Barriers included stigma, lack of time, institutional norms
- Desire for more visible and culturally integrated wellness support
- Positive impact of wellness services when accessed

The results underscored the importance of well-being for students and new members. Respondents consistently defined wellness as a state of overall health and balance—mental, physical, and emotional—supported by time, relationships, and freedom from overwhelming stress or financial strain. One participant captured this sentiment by stating that wellness allows individuals “to enjoy life and pursue fulfillment within one’s reality.”

Despite the shared value, the findings revealed notable barriers:

- **29%** of respondents reported gaps in access and awareness, saying they are “not sure what is available,” find it “intimidating to go the first time,” and expressed a desire for clearer paths to services.

- **20%** identified time and workload as obstacles, citing “no time to research,” an “overbearing work culture,” and the need for “stronger and stricter boundaries between school/work and personal life.”
- **16%** called for systemic and cultural reform, emphasizing the need to reduce stigma around therapy.” Another respondent reinforced this by urging the profession to “normalize therapy.”

## Recommendations

The workgroup developed a four-stage progression and additional recommendations.

### FOUR-STAGE PROGRESSION

#### 1. Provide General Support

- Offer presentations on stress, anxiety, depression, substance use, suicidality, addiction, interpersonal effectiveness, empathy, community building, boundary setting, motivation and focus, sleep and diet hygiene
- Establish a calendar of events aligned with industry trends
- Develop mental health support packages for self-use

#### 2. Foster Connection to Resources

- Explore and document targeted resources within and outside of WSBA
- Provide insight into legal culture to bridge communication with decision makers

#### 3. Facilitate Community Building

- Collaborate intentionally on programming
- Recruit external experts for presentations (legal professionals, substance use consultants, organizational psychologists) targeted to support new members
- Develop peer support groups, yoga classes, allyship initiatives
- Explore a formal mentorship program for new members

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#### 4. Cultivate Culture Change

- Encourage myth-busting and resilience models
- Provide opportunities for interpersonal mediation and crisis prevention
- Normalize holistic care for legal professionals
- The workgroup suggests WSBA flag these recommendations to the Washington New Member Committee and New Member Education Program

#### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 5. Implement Well-Being Curriculum in Law Schools

- Mandatory well-being course at the start of law school and annually thereafter<sup>5</sup>

##### 6. Provide Well-Being CLEs

- Deliver more CLE credits to support practitioner well-being

## Private Practice Workgroup

Annasara Purcell (Chair), Melissa Berry, Dan Crystal, Darcel Lobo, Kyle Sciuchetti, Melissa Jaffe, Aaron Paker.

### Overview

The Private Practice Workgroup examined well-being challenges for lawyers in solo/small, medium, and large firms through survey data and a supplemental solo/small firm practice survey, and review of other states' initiatives. These findings informed recommendations aimed at addressing systemic and cultural barriers to well-being.

### WSBA Well-Being Survey Results

The WSBA well-being survey results made clear that private practice is not a monolith and lawyers working for different types of private practice firms face significantly different issues. Lawyers running

their own solo practice, for example, report working slightly less hours than the general lawyer population and experiencing less depression on average. These lawyers, however, did report having fewer employer resources to help with well-being.

On the other end of the spectrum, lawyers who worked for medium to large firms were more likely to be expected to bill more than 1,701 hours per year, and lawyers with higher billing expectations were more likely to experience an array of negative well-being outcomes (including feelings of burnout, considering leaving the profession, and higher levels of concern about their substance use). Litigators reported having greater levels of distress when compared to non-litigator groups: they reported a higher rate of concern that work causes alcohol consumption, a 13% higher rate of exposure to traumatic content, and less sleep than the non-litigation group.

Nonetheless, two important commonalities emerged across all private practice lawyer sub-groups. First, stigma around mental health challenges or substance use disorder poses a major barrier to seeking treatment.

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5. We note that ABA Standard 508 provides a law school shall provide all its students, regardless of enrollment or scheduling option, with information on law student well-being resources. [2025-2026 Standards Chapter 5](#)

## View results

Respondent

26

Anonymous

05:29

Time to complete

### 1. Member Name:

Alex Reaganson, as Chair

### 2. Do you have any updates since the last meeting?

Yes

No

### 3. If yes, please provide your update below:

Attended BoG Meeting on May 1-2nd. Took two firm actions on behalf of the committee, including (1) spoke on regulatory proposal regarding removing ABA-accreditation requirement to sit for bar exam, following BoG Liaison's suggestion at April meeting. Specifically commented that WNMC continues to support the removal of unnecessary barriers to practice, given that we do not require ABA-accreditation to be overall admitted, though highlighted that the committee did not have time to consider and take an official position, and; (2) listened to Wellness Task Force's read out on Wellness Survey, including a read out on a specific "Law Student/New Member" workgroup, and so invited Task Force representatives to attend our July Meeting for a more comprehensive read out of the concerning data.

### 4. If no, please provide a brief explanation as to why not:

## View results

Respondent

28

Anonymous

01:01

Time to complete

1. Member Name:

Janta Steele

2. Do you have any updates since the last meeting?

Yes

No

3. If yes, please provide your update below:

The Mentorship Project Team has had additional feedback on the Lunch & Learn and is trying to incorporate the feedback. We are meeting again soon to ensure we are making progress.

4. If no, please provide a brief explanation as to why not:

## View results

Respondent

25

Anonymous

02:31

Time to complete

### 1. Member Name:

Alex Reaganson, as PSLA Team Lead

### 2. Do you have any updates since the last meeting?

Yes

No

### 3. If yes, please provide your update below:

PSLA Applications for 2026 award period have opened. Already moving forward with same outreach strategy as previous two years. Will work with Pro Bono & Public Service Committee to utilize their list serves and with legal aid task forces to utilize theirs. If anyone knows of any outreach means to target governmental attorneys, would be helpful to solicit as many applications as possible.

### 4. If no, please provide a brief explanation as to why not:

## View results

Respondent

27

Anonymous

03:55

Time to complete

### 1. Member Name:

Alex Reaganson, as Charter Team Lead

### 2. Do you have any updates since the last meeting?

Yes

No

### 3. If yes, please provide your update below:

The Charter team has met twice since the April meeting. The first, on May 11, was focused on reviewing the commentary and feedback from the General Counsel's office and making small adjustments therein the latest draft of the charter. The second was held on May 13th to finalize edits to the charter text, discuss any last minute changes/proposals from within the team, and then finally discuss implementation of the new charter's shift to Congressional District representation from the current regional model.

### 4. If no, please provide a brief explanation as to why not:

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## WASHINGTON NEW MEMBERS COMMITTEE (WNMC) CHARTER

**\*Pending Approval by the WSBA Board of Governance\***

### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the WNMC shall be to support the professional development of new members of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) by providing mentorship, leadership opportunities, and resources that address pressing challenges such as student debt and practical skills gaps. The committee aims to serve as a trusted resource for stakeholders and foster meaningful new member engagement within the legal community.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

#### **Goal 1. Be Data-Driven.**

- *Objective A.* Collect and analyze data on new members' needs through post-licensure surveys and other evaluative forms.
- *Objective B:* Produce reports and provide recommendations to the Board of Governors based on data-driven insights.
- *Objective C:* Regularly explore and develop independent committee projects and participate in projects across WSBA in line with appropriate data.

#### **Goal 2: Advocate.**

- *Objective A.* Represent, advise and advocate for new members within the WSBA Board of Governors and other decision-makers to ensure new member issues and voices are included in decision-making.
- *Objective B.* Address regular and emerging challenges unique to new members, such as transition to practice and opportunities for practical skills development.

#### **Goal 3. Grow and Connect.**

- *Objective A:* Establish robust pathways and partnerships to ensure new members feel supported in the profession.
- *Objective B:* Strengthen connections with law schools, affinity bars, along with WSBA entities and programs.
- *Objective C:* Foster a positive culture and meaningful networks of support.

#### **Goal 4: Pro Bono Empowerment.**

- *Objective A:* Build and promote partnerships that enable and encourage new members to engage in pro bono work.
- *Objective B:* Provide a positive example of volunteerism within the Washington State Bar Association.

## Goal 5: Professional Development.

- *Objective A:* Promote CLEs, experiential learning, and leadership opportunities tailored to new members.
- *Objective B:* Increase engagement through section liaison roles and other leadership opportunities.
- *Objective C:* Develop and/or promote formal and informal mentorship programs to facilitate development of legal practice skills.

### Meetings

- Time and Place: The WNMC shall aspire to meet monthly, unless otherwise noted by this Charter or at the discretion of the Chair;
  - Additionally, the WNMC shall aspire that one meeting per quarter is held in-person or a hybrid fashion.
    - If such meetings are held, at least one should be set for a time and place that aligns with a regular Board of Governors meeting.
- Meeting Expectations:
  - The Chair shall establish an agenda for each meeting and ensure such agendas are distributed approximately one week prior to each meeting, in coordination with the WNMC Staff Liaison(s).
  - If the Chair is unable to attend any scheduled meeting, the Chair-Elect shall assume the role and its responsibilities for that meeting; if the Chair-Elect is also unavailable, then the Immediate Past Chair shall assume the same.
  - It is expected that all members of the WNMC shall have no more than two unexcused absences from regular meetings.
  - It is expected that all members of the WNMC shall actively participate in at least one project team.

### Committee Membership

- Leadership Team:
  - The Chairs:
    - Chair
    - Chair-Elect, as Vice Chair
    - Immediate Past Chair
  - WSBA Board of Governors Liaison, *ex-officio* (non-voting, generally)<sup>1</sup>
  - WNMC Staff Liaison(s), *ex officio* (non-voting, generally)<sup>2</sup>
- Congressional District Representatives (Eligibility based on either home or work address):
  - District 1
  - District 2
  - District 3
  - District 4
  - District 5
  - District 6
  - District 7 (North)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *infra* "Recommendations Subcommittee"

<sup>2</sup> See *infra* "Recommendations Subcommittee"

<sup>3</sup> As defined by zip code boundaries established for the District 7 (North) position on the WSBA Board of Governors.

- District 7 (South)<sup>4</sup>
- District 8
- District 9
- District 10
- Six Statewide At-Large Representatives:
  - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Representative:
    - The DEI Representative shall act as the lead in promoting diversity and inclusion within the WSBA New Member community, as well as serve as a liaison, when necessary, between the WNMC and other DEI-related entities within WSBA. The representative shall also work with WNMC leadership and project teams to ensure that WNMC initiatives are considered and operated with a sense of equity and justice for all new members.
  - Pro Bono & Public Service Representative:
    - The Pro Bono & Public Service Representative shall act as the lead in promoting Goal 4 of this Charter. In so doing, the representative shall act as a liaison between the WNMC, the New Member community at-large, related WSBA entities, and other relevant external stakeholders when appropriate.
  - Solo & Small Practice Representative:
    - The Solo & Small Practice Representative shall be a voice on behalf of new members within the solo & small practice community. In so doing, when appropriate, the representative shall act as a liaison to the Solo & Small Practice Section and the Small Town and Rural (STAR) Council.
  - Three (3) General At-Large Representatives
- Terms:
  - The voting members of the WNMC shall be appointed for a term of three years.
  - The terms of At-Large and District Representatives shall be staggered so no more than one-third of these positions' terms end each year, categorized accordingly:
    - Class A (with terms beginning October 1, 2026):
      - At-Large: General Representative (Class A)
      - At-Large: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Representative
      - District 2
      - District 5
      - District 7 (North)
      - District 10
    - Class B (with terms beginning October 1, 2027):
      - At-Large: General Representative (Class B)
      - At-Large: Public Service Representative
      - District 3
      - District 4
      - District 7 (South)
    - Class C (with terms beginning October 1, 2028)
      - At-Large: General Representative (Class C)
      - At-Large: Solo & Small Practice Representative
      - District 1
      - District 6

<sup>4</sup> As defined by zip code boundaries established for the District 7 (South) position on the WSBA Board of Governors.

- District 8
- District 9

### **Nominations and Appointment**

- The WSBA Executive Director will designate WSBA staff liaison(s) to support the WNMC, as the WNMC Staff Liaison(s).
- WNMC Committee members will be appointed by the Board of Governors in accordance with WSBA Bylaws, upon recommendation by the WNMC’s Recommendations Subcommittee.
- **Recommendations Subcommittee:**
  - The purpose of the Recommendations Subcommittee shall be to review and consider all applicants to voting positions on the WNMC<sup>5</sup>, as well as recommend qualifying candidates to the Board of Governors for appointment.
  - The Recommendations Subcommittee shall include all members of the WNMC Leadership Team.
    - Recommendation decisions shall be decided by a majority vote of the Subcommittee, with five total votes allocated accordingly:
      - One vote for the Chair;
      - One vote for the Chair-Elect;
      - One vote for the Immediate Past Chair;
      - One collective vote for the WSBA Staff Liaison(s), and;
      - One vote by WSBA Board of Governors Liaison.
    - It is understood that decisions by the Recommendations Subcommittee are preferred to be unanimous. However, should there be a significant split as to a recommendation, the Committee may vote to provide no more than two recommendations for the Board of Governors to consider.
      - If such an event occurs, the Recommendations Subcommittee shall put forth the two potential recommendations to the full committee for advice and consent on a single recommendation, to be decided by majority vote of the full committee.
  - *Chair-Elect Recommendations:* The Recommendations Subcommittee shall recommend a Chair-Elect, from amongst qualifying applicants for the position, no later than the last day of February, each year, for service beginning October 1, following appointment by the WSBA-BOG President-Elect in accordance with WSBA Bylaws.
    - Should a current district or at-large representative be appointed as Chair-Elect, the position of said representative shall become vacant and any remaining term shall be open for applications during the regular committee recruitment process (beginning in April of each year), unless the position is filled by a mid-term appointment in accordance with the WSBA Bylaws and this Charter.
    - Those selected as Chair-Elect shall serve a three-year term, split accordingly: one (1) year as Chair-Elect; one (1) year as Chair, and; one (1) year as Immediate Past-Chair.
  - *At-Large, District Representative Recommendations:* The Recommendations Subcommittee shall recommend individuals to the at-large and district representative positions based on factors which will achieve the broadest range of diversity, practice area, and experience possible.

<sup>5</sup> In regard to the voting positions of Chair and Immediate Past Chair, such positions shall be included as part of the recommendations for Chair-Elect. See *infra* “Chair-Elect Recommendations.”

- *Prolonged Vacancies:* If any at-large or district representative positions have not been filled after six consecutive months of vacancy, the Recommendations Subcommittee may recommend to such position(s) any qualified new member(s) that agree to represent the perspective of that position in good faith, regardless of the individual’s practice area or district of residence/employment.

**Success Criteria**

- Data showing net-positive new member satisfaction and integration across current and relevant priorities.
- Increased evidence of new members regularly attending, engaging with, and providing evaluative feedback on WNMC events and initiatives.
- Regular communication with new members, with corresponding positive social media engagement analytics.
- A fully staffed and engaged committee both in terms of attendance and project team participation.
- Proactive engagement and consultation with the WNMC by the WSBA Board of Governors and other bar entities.

**Reporting & Evaluation**

- *Annual Report.* The committee will produce an annual report pursuant to the WSBA Bylaws.
- *Charter and Entity Evaluation.* The work of the committee and its charter should be reviewed and renewed by the Board of Governors every five years after approval of the original charter.

**Supremacy and Clean-Up**

- This document shall be considered superior to and replace all previous WNMC governing documents and policies related to the topics above. This includes the 2014 Washington Young Lawyers Committee Appointment Policy, previous bylaws for the former WYLC and WYLD, and any other such documents not named here.
- Upon the approval of any relevant WSBA Bylaws amendment, this Charter shall be updated accordingly to reflect that change and ensure continued compliance with the WSBA Bylaws.

**Approved by the FY26 Washington New Members Committee, this \_\_\_ Day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026**




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**Alexander R. Reaganson, WSBA# 59365**  
**2025-2026 Chair, Charter Team Lead**

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**Janta Steele, WSBA# 60876**  
**Chair-Elect, Charter Team**

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**Mason Ji, WSBA# 58292**  
**Imm. Past Chair, Charter Team**

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**Ariel L. Cook, WSBA# 63105**  
**Greater Olympia Rep., Charter Team**

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**Mackenzie J. Lloyd, WSBA# 60238**  
*Southeast Reg. Rep., Charter Team*

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**Fatima Sami Al-Rikabi, WSBA# 63579**  
*Snohomish Co. Rep., Charter Team*

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**Matthew Rommelmann, WSBA# 60749**  
*Northwest Representative*

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**Chawisa Laicharoenwat, WSBA# 60882**  
*At-Large Representative*

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**Hanna Terra Harrison, WSBA# 58264**  
*Greater Spokane Representative*

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**Michelle Margaret Heese, WSBA# 62815**  
*North Central Representative*

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**Steven C. Brown, Jr., WSBA# 54096**  
*At-Large Representative*

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**Stephan Yhann, WSBA# 54230**  
*At-Large Representative*

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**Bethany Beal Nolan, WSBA# 55788**  
*King Co. Representative*

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**Mackenzie Spinks, WSBA# 62048**  
*King Co. Representative*

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**Thomas Lyle Garvey, WSBA# 57283**  
*Peninsula Representative*

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**Jordan Lee Couch, WSBA# 49684**  
*New Member Gov. (At-Large), WSBA-BOG*

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**Michelle Gegax**  
*WNMC Staff Liaison*

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**Vanessa Sweeny**  
*WNMC Staff Support*

Region to Congressional District Implementation Comparison:

Current Regions (Cong. Dist.), Current Occupant

Organized by Current Term End Date. (Term-Limited\*\*)

- Oct. 2026
  - Southwest (Vacant) (CD: 3)
  - Northwest (CD: 2), Matt R.
  - North Central (CD: 4, 5, 8), Michelle H.
  - Greater Olympia (CDs: 3, 10), Ariel C.
  - Greater Spokane (CD: 5), Hanna H.
  - King County (1) (CDs: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9), Bethany N.
  - At-Large (1), Stephan Y.\*\*
  - Southeast (CDs: 4, 5), Mackenzie L.
- Oct. 2027
  - King County (2) (CDs: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9), Makenzie S.
  - At-Large (2), Steven B.
  - Peninsula (CD: 6), Thomas G.
  - South Central (Vacant) (CDs: 4, 8)
  - Pierce (Vacant) (CDs: 6, 8, 10)
- Oct. 2028
  - Snohomish (CDs: 1, 2), Fatima Al-Rikabi
  - At-Large (3), Chawisa L.\*\*

Class A (with terms beginning October 1, 2026):

- At-Large: General Representative (Class A): TBD with current Cycle
- At-Large: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Representative: TBD with current Cycle
- District 2: TBD with current Cycle
- District 5: TBD with current Cycle
- District 7 (North): TBD with current Cycle
- District 10: TBD with current Cycle

Class B (with terms beginning October 1, 2027):

- At-Large: General Representative (Class B): Steven B.
- At-Large: Public Service Representative: Available for Interim Appt.
- District 3: Available for Interim Appt.
- District 4: Mackenzie L. (Interim, would be a one-year extension of current term)
- District 7 (South): Bethany N. (Interim, would be a one-year extension of current term)

Class C (with terms beginning October 1, 2028)

- At-Large: General Representative (Class C): Chawisa
- At-Large: Solo & Small Practice Representative: Available for Interim Appt.
- District 1: Fatima
- District 6: Thomas (Interim, would be a one-year extension of current term)
- District 8: Available for Interim Appt.
- District 9: Available for Interim Appt.,
- Current Committee Members Eligible for Interim CD Appointments:
  - District 3:
    - Ariel (due to ties from previous regional role);
  - District 8:
    - Michelle H. (Home District & ties from previous regional role);
  - District 9:
    - Makenzie S. (“Home” Zip Code is split between CD 7(S) & CD 9, ties from previous regional role)
    - Ariel (“Home” Zip Code is split between CD 7(S) & CD 9)
- Members not eligible due to two-term limit: N/A for FY27 Cycle