**Diversity Committee Minutes**

**July 11th, 2022 12:00 pm - 1:30 pm**

The Washington State Bar Association’s Diversity Committee is dedicated to implementing WSBA’s

Diversity and Inclusion Plan. The work of the committee promotes historically underrepresented groups to enter and stay in the profession of law. The Diversity Committee does this through collaborative relationships and community building activities, which highlight the numerous societal benefits of a diverse law profession.

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**Attendees:** Nam Nguyen, Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel, Laine Ellison, Danitza Casselman, Luís Beltrán, SaNni Lemonidis, Megan Dawson, Gov. Matthew Dresden, Monica Reinmiller, Gov. Alec Stephens.

**WSBA Employees:** Diana Singleton, Imani Shannon, Nicholas Mejía, Saleena Salango, Barbara Nahouraii

**Guests:** President Brian Tollefson

Meeting Called to Order 12:06

**Meeting Minutes**: Moved to approved to minutes as amended to add the title “Governor” before governor’s names in the initial roll as stated at the top of the minutes as to identify voting members. All voted in favor.

**ARC Reception Update:** The ARC Reception is a one-time networking event. Judge Mansfield will be the keynote speaker. The meeting will be 100% over zoom this year. Last year students met virtually as well where they participated in breakout rooms to meet attorneys.

**Volunteer Recruitment**

Wanted to be aware after the July BOG meeting, what communities they want to focus on making targeted recruitment to. The survey will be sent out again. It was previously sent out and had only received two (2) responses since it was sent out. The committee would need to find out if they would become a DEI council before moving forward.

**Diversity Stakeholders List Serve**

Staff wanted to evaluate the listserv to see if it was helping or not. The overwhelming response was that people wanted the list serve for events, job postings, BOG information, etc. 70-80% wanted things such as those previously listed, 20% wanted the list serve to be a space for open dialogue. It was decided to keep the list serve as an information only space and that a WSBA staff member will moderate the listserv. This hasn’t been announced to the listserv yet, committee feedback was requested.

**Council Explanation:** It will be brought for second read and will be voted on at the next BOG meeting.

**Membership Demographic Study:** The WSBA Equity and Justice Department hired Kno-Why, a consulting firm that will be starting a kickoff meeting that will either be the last week of July or the first week of August. A small inner communication group is working to figure out how to create a survey design in an efficient way and include pertinent individuals or communities.

**Definition of Diversity for At-Large Governors:**

The draft definition is based on committee criteria, ABA model diversity plan, 2021 federal executive order, and more. The workgroup drafted a list of potential stakeholders, SaNni helped with outreach, Imani drafted a memo, the subcommittee had two feedback sessions, and feedback was collected from sessions. Potential applicants will submit their applications and the BOG would vote anonymously to choose the member.

It was believed that race was and has been integral towards choosing an at large governor. Those who apply come to the committee for review, but the committee is not empowered to recommend who is on the ballot. Governor Stephens mentioned that it was important to remove geography from the criteria. By centering race, it is recognized that historically this state and country has been racially exclusionary. As a result of this by centering race, there is now opportunity for racial minorities to have a voice. Data shows that the greatest disparities in housing, health, employment, etc. have been those of minority races. It was noted that race can keep various marginalized communities from coming together. When given the tools to center those who have been impacted the most, it can bring others together. The Supreme Court called on legal entities to recognize racism is still prominent in the legal systems and called on state agencies to integrate this in their work. A concern is that there will be pushback by groups who think that other issues may be important to center. Another concern is that the centering of race could affect the buy in of other governors and some warned that jumping in too soon may be hurtful to the productiveness of the workgroup.

The reason why race was centered as described by Saleena was because “many inequalities are compounded and inseparable from racism. If you absent racism from conversations about ability/disability, heterosexism, transphobia, etc., then we default to talking about whiteness and risk not moving forward in the most equitable way possible”. It is a concern by Gov. Stephens how applicants will be considered if they may not fit certain criteria and if some governors will be excluded because they don’t fit the criteria provided in the definition upon applying.

The projected timeline was to have a discussion for the July Diversity Committee meeting, vote on the substantive portions of the proposal for the August committee meeting, have the first reading in September and the second at a later date. Gov. Anjilvel stated that this decision is monumental and expressed that it may be important to not rush, stating that it may be important to engage stakeholders, the MBAs, and other groups and have additional discussions around this topic. Gov. Stephens mentioned that he would like to vote on this as a council to include the votes of all members rather than the current governors on the committee. Members of the committee stated they were in agreement. One suggestion was to get the topic on the agenda for the MBA leader meeting or the Supreme Court Gender and Justice meeting.

Gov. Dresden stated that it would be important to get this information out prior to individuals applying for the At-Large Governor positions. A proposal should be finalized by November. There should be a definition presented to the BOG by January for first reading. The committee will continue to have this discussion at next month’s meeting and focus on questions one (1) and two (2).

Meeting adjourned 1:28 p.m.