

## **Character & Fitness Board**

### **Volunteer Position Description**

The Character and Fitness Board conducts hearings to determine whether applicants for admission to the practice of law can establish that they have the good moral character and fitness required to engage in the practice of law. After reading the hearing materials and considering the testimony, the Board prepares written findings and a recommendation, which are submitted to the Washington Supreme Court for final decision and action.

**Position overview:** Licensed legal professionals are required to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct, which is necessary in order to protect their clients from potential harm that could be caused by their actions. The Character and Fitness Board plays a significant public protection role by helping the Washington Supreme Court reach an opinion about whether applicants will be able to maintain those standards. In doing this, the Board conducts a very personalized hearing for each applicant and can be presented with evidence of significant prior or current misconduct and/or inspiring stories of rehabilitation. The Board must:

- Read hearing materials in advance of hearings, and be prepared to ask questions based on those materials;
- Listen to testimony during hearings, ask questions of applicants and witnesses, weigh evidence, deliberate with other Board members, and arrive at a Board decision regarding a recommendation;
- As assigned, and with the help of other Board members and WSBA staff, prepare written findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation regarding admission, within the required timeline;
- Maintain strict confidentiality of materials and subject matter.

Appointment is for a 3-year term. Members may generally not serve another term until 3 years have passed.

**Time commitment:** The Board generally meets one day a month, and most of the meetings last all day. Board members receive the hearing materials a week in advance of the meeting day, and must review them before the meeting. Depending on the extent of the materials, review may take from a couple of hours to one day to read. Meetings are held in WSBA's office in Seattle. Members are expected to attend in person although occasional telephone participation may be permitted if required by circumstances.

**Requirements:**

- Active members of WSBA and members of the public are eligible to apply.
- Lawyer members of WSBA must have been licensed to practice for at least 5 years.
- Appointees will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

**Preferred qualifications and skills:** Preferred skills include the ability to treat all applicants with dignity and respect, maintain an open mind until all evidence has been presented, use a computer of some type to review documentation, weigh conflicting evidence and arrive at a decision, state and explain personal opinions in a polite and professional manner, work collaboratively with a group to arrive at a group

decision, write clearly and persuasively, and maintain strict confidentiality regarding materials and hearings. Experience working in a judicial position of any type may be helpful, but is not required.

**Benefits:** Board members will obtain experience in conducting hearings and writing decisions while contributing to the professionalism of the practice of law, and will be inspired by some of the personal stories they hear.

**Reimbursement policy:** This is an unpaid volunteer position. Reasonable travel expenses may be reimbursed per the WSBA Expense Reimbursement Policy.

**Selection and appointment process:** Applications are reviewed by a team including the chair, vice chair, staff liaison and BOG liaison. Recommendations are made to the Board of Governors Nominations Committee, which makes the appointments.

**For further information:** See [www.wsba.org/Legal-Community/Committees-Boards-and-Other-Groups/character-fitness-board](http://www.wsba.org/Legal-Community/Committees-Boards-and-Other-Groups/character-fitness-board).

**How to apply:** See instructions at [www.wsba.org/joincommittee](http://www.wsba.org/joincommittee). Questions about the application? Email [barleaders@wsba.org](mailto:barleaders@wsba.org). Questions about the application? Email [barleaders@wsba.org](mailto:barleaders@wsba.org).