

WSBA Volunteer Engagement NBRI Survey Findings

**WASHINGTON STATE
BAR ASSOCIATION**



**National Business
Research Institute**

MAY 2023

**Washington State Bar Association
Compiled/Summarize by: Paris Eriksen,
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Summary

Key Takeaways:

- Current volunteers are motivated to by the opportunity for professional development and networking.
- Current volunteers plan to continue service.
- Members no longer volunteer because they do not have the time right now, they volunteer elsewhere in the legal community, the opportunities do not meet their interests or they have negative perceptions regarding the organization, for example it is too political and bureaucratic.
- The primary reason why members do not volunteer is a lack of time/availability, sometimes combined with the fact that they are volunteering elsewhere.
- There is a misunderstanding, amongst some members, that WSBA does direct client work. This may be a result of some members observing no 'visible' WSBA volunteer opportunities in their geographic area, and/or a lack of malpractice insurance preventing volunteer work with clients. This could also simply be a misunderstanding about 'who' is asking the question.
- Members and volunteers would like to have a deeper understanding and awareness of the value and impact of their volunteer work.

Opportunities:

- Support and foster community and opportunities for networking amongst current volunteers. Such as online engagement, events, and/or generative discussion/focus groups.
- To better support returning volunteers, WSBA should consider improvements to the online application process.
- As respondents indicated that time was a factor in their ability to volunteer, WSBA could consider improving communication regarding short-term/episodic volunteer opportunities and exploring the development of additional short-term project based volunteer opportunities.
- Clearly describe the WSBA volunteer work in a succinct way that accurately describes the work and the sets accurate expectations of the roles with added emphasis on clearly articulating the impact and outcomes of the volunteer work as well as the benefit to the volunteer and recipient(s) of the outcomes.
- Take the time to review our processes and determine where we can streamline or shift the burden of the 'bureaucracy' away form the volunteer.
- Develop messaging specifically targeting those approaching retirement.
- Improves ways to communicate impact and demonstrate how the organization values volunteers and volunteer work.
- 'Meet the Entity' or 'Volunteer Fair' – as a way to introduce individuals to volunteer opportunities. Encourage learning, networking, dialogue to build awareness and education about volunteer opportunities. Each volunteer could be encouraged to 'Send a Friend' to the 'fair.'

Response Rates

Survey Timeline: May 2023

Number Responding	Number Possible	Response Rate
217	3,000	7%

The survey reached a Confidence Level (CL) of 87.37% with a 5% Sampling Error (SE). This surpasses NBRI's minimum standard for confidently performing a data analysis (80% or greater CL and 5% or smaller SE).

Respondent Demographic Information

Years Licensed: Top 5 (not included: under 6, 6-10, 11-15, and 36-40)

	Number Responding	Percentage
16-20	21	14%
21-25	15	10%
26-30	19	13%
31-35	19	13%
41 and over	29	20%

Member Type:

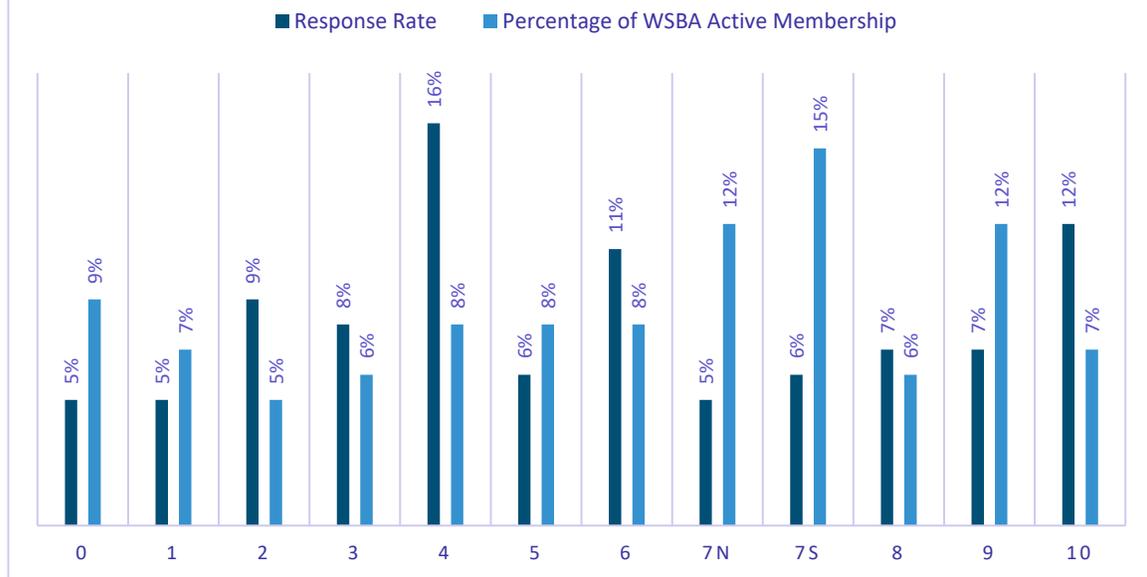
	Number Responding	Percentage
Active Attorney	194	97%
Active LLLT	2	1%
Active LPO	5	2%

Residence: Top 5

(Not included: Adams, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lewis, Lincoln, Mason, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Spokane, Stevens, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla, Whatcom, Whitman and Yakima)

	Number Responding	Percentage
Out of State	16	8%
King	82	40%
Kitsap	14	7%
Thurston	18	9%
Pierce	14	7%

RESPONSE RATE BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT



Survey Responses – General

Select the best response: Have you volunteered with the Washington State Bar Association?

	Number Responding	Percentage
I currently volunteer with WSBA	5	2%
I have previously volunteered with WSBA	74	34%
I have never volunteered with WSBA.	137	63%

Current Volunteer (5) Responses:

What is your current volunteer role?

(Not listed/No Response: Board of Governors, WSBA Councils, Supreme Court Boards)

	Number Responding	Percentage
WSBA Committee	2	40%
WSBA Section Executive Committee	1	20%
Project Based: ad hoc work group, CLE faculty...	2	40%

How long have you served as a WSBA volunteer?

(Not listed/No Response: Less than a year, 11-16 years.)

	Number Responding	Percentage
2-5 years	3	60%
6-10 years	1	20%
16+ years	1	20%

Do you currently volunteer elsewhere in the legal community?

	Number Responding	Percentage
Yes. If so, what do you do?	3	60%
No	2	40%

Comments:

- *Civics education/mock trials*
- *OSB Attorney Well-Being Committee*
- *Spokane County Bar Association Indian Law Section, Spokane Nordic Ski Association, California Indian Law Association.*

Do you feel that the time and energy you contribute to WSBA is a valuable use of your time?

	Number Responding	Percentage
Yes.	3	60%
Somewhat. What could WSBA do to improve?	1	20%
No. Why not?	1	20%

Comments:

- *It is a little too bureaucratic at times.*
- *For the current WSBA committee I haven't yet been asked to do anything. I've enjoyed previous WSBA task force and current OSB committee volunteer service.*

What motivates you to volunteer with WSBA? Check all that apply.

(Not listed/No Response: support the regulation of the practice)

	Number Responding	Percentage
Networking	4	80%
Professional Development	4	80%
Leadership Opportunities	2	40%
Committed to the WSBA Mission	2	40%
Effect systemic change in the legal system	2	40%
Other:	1	20%

Comments:

- *Remind and acquaint myself with attorneys of integrity when regular practice can be so discouraging.*

What are the benefits of volunteering with WSBA? Check all that apply.

	Number Responding	Percentage
It feels good to give back.	3	60%

Networking	4	80%
I like being more involved in the bar association.	2	40%
Other:	1	20%

Comment:

- *Improve the legal system for the public and promote the highest ethics of the profession.*

In the future, do you plan to continue your volunteer work with WSBA?

	Number Responding	Percentage
Yes	5	100%
No. If no, why not?	0	0%

Would you/do you encourage others to volunteer with WSBA?

	Number Responding	Percentage
Yes	4	80%
No. If no, why not?	1	20%

Comment:

- *You have to already be motivated to the specific committee cause, and an advanced practitioner to know what needs changing and have resources to try to do it. Also, like my current committee, you might never be called upon or meet/talk with anyone – you applied to no effect.*

When speaking with someone who has never volunteered with WSBA, how would you describe the work you do? And what would you say to encourage them to volunteer?

Comments:

- *I participate in CLE programs, which gives me the opportunity to continue my professional development and come in contact with professionals involved in my practice area of concentration. This improves my skills and expands my professional network and helps me develop my practice.*
- *It is very bureaucratic and officious, but it is good opportunity to be involved and keep tabs on what is going on with an organization that is important to our careers as lawyers.*
- *Section Executive Committee meetings are monthly and CLE planning is more. It is valuable to give back to the relevant legal community.*

Anything that WSBA can do to better support you in your volunteer work?

Comments:

- *Make it actually happen. Make it fun (in-person meetings again). Make it matter, like Mandatory Malpractice Task Force did.*
- *Require a lower proportion of CLE revenue.*
- *Since the pandemic has ended, CLE presentations have return to in-person presentations. That is good because the platform used by the Bar for remote presentations was really awful – very hard to*

navigate and prone to technical difficulties. I really don't understand why the Bar chose a unique platform rather than going with zoom (the UW used zoom) or Microsoft Meetings.

Previous Volunteer (74) Responses:

What was your volunteer role(s)? Check all that apply.

	Number Responding	Percentage
Board of Governors	3	4%
WSBA Committee	42	59%
WSBA Councils	2	3%
WSBA Section Executive Committee	15	21%
Supreme Court Boards	7	10%
Project Based: ad hoc work group, CLE faculty...	29	41%

For what reason(s) you do no longer volunteer with WSBA Check all that apply.

Not included/no response: my firm/employer is not supportive of volunteer work, my firm/employer provides opportunities elsewhere.

	Number Responding	Percentage
Just can't right now, but will return when I can.	17	24%
I volunteer elsewhere in the legal community.	19	26%
No longer relevant to me. Don't see the value.	12	17%
I felt like I wasn't making an impact	7	10%
I felt like I wasn't heard.	7	10%
The available opportunities are not appealing to me.	6	8%
Status change (now I'm inactive or Judicial)	7	10%
I like to work directly with those in need.	6	8%
Didn't want to travel to attend meetings.	4	6%
Other:	21	29%

Comments:

- *As an LLLT, WSBA does not support me.*
- *Got tired*
- *I am cutting back on my volunteerism*
- *I am in emeritus status*
- *I am retiring from the practice of law. I would consider volunteering with WSBA for pro bono work, if it was of limited duration and I did not need to represent clients.*
- *I kept applying for committees and never got chosen except one time so I stopped trying.*
- *It was a hassle to reapply.*
- *Not aware of opportunities.*
- *Other interests as this time.*
- *Part-time attorney*
- *Practice area had changed a bit.*

- *Stopped being asked to function in role as special disciplinary counsel.*
- *The wsba process was too difficult.*
- *Time*
- *Too old – 83*
- *When called upon the Securities Committee*
- *You have become too political.*

Is there anything WSBA could do differently to bring you back as a volunteer?

Only substantive responses included; responses such as ‘no’ or ‘not that I can think of’ are not included.

Comments:

- *1. I am fully retired and live in Calif., where I am member of bar and volunteer. I volunteer for Stat Bar here because State Bar VALUES retired members, unlike WSBA, in at least 2 ways: 1. No annual dues charge for members no longer practicing. Encourages pro bono practice in several different ways (sometimes including providing professional liability coverage).*
- *Accept my application to volunteer.*
- *As the WSBA as an institution and its members have moved left, the volunteer choices have become driven by ideology and the participants ideological activists pushing a point of view. What has happened with the Bar is the same thing that has happened in the law schools: class choices that appeal to a miniscule audience solely for the sake of the 21st century god of diversity*
- *I am moving toward retirement. I enjoyed greatly all of my volunteer activities, and wish I could have done more.*
- *I am now working in legal services, with the Tenant Law Center. This is the best fit for me as a lawyer. I can do the most good for tenants in my role as a Staff Attorney. I practiced in Pierce County before I joined this org. The WSBA always felt very Seattle-centric and exclusionary for those of us not practice in Seattle or with a big firm. What would make me want to step up more would be in the Bar would give up the Seattle office, lease or buy space on accessible transit from the airport, and stop spending millions per year on rent.*
- *I am inactive status now and have found other ways to volunteer in the community. The committee I served on, and the Bar generally, did not seem to include the role of public sector lawyers.*
- *I don't think so. I would consider volunteer legal work for the right issue.*
- *I'm a sole practitioner and time limitations do not permit me to do as much as I used to.*
- *Instead of the BOG instantly shutting down expansion of our scope for what I and many view as political reasons, you should consider the facts, the record, and support ALL members in good standing.*
- *Less seasoned members need to be sensitized to the possibility that seasoned members have experiences that can be illuminating and should be considered.*
- *Make the application process more streamlined, easier to complete.*
- *Make the process less onerous. Make it more likely that if someone offers, they are given a meaningful role and not rejected. I went through a long application process several times only to be told, 'no.' In terms of pro bono – again, don't make it a rigid process in which the volunteer has to jump through hoops to volunteer for a specific listed organization, trust the member to find a meaningful opportunity. The bureaucracy of it all, in typical wsba, has put me off of all of it.*
- *No. Why are you trying to make up things for us to do just so you can do stuff and have a lot of volunteers? A lot of pointless churn.*
- *Occasional email about start up opportunities.*
- *Offer a position*

- *Probably not, I am interested in working to change the legal profession to make it more responsive to public needs but didn't see any plans to survey the public, just other lawyers, that is why I left my committee and it doesn't seem like it is likely to change.*
- *Stop focusing on the BOG and pro forma activities and focus on members of the Bar.*
- *The further away an attorney gets from Seattle, or sometimes Olympia, groups, the harder it is to be connected to groups. The Seattle participants think they represent more of the population, so they have more to offer.*
- *WSBA is not active in Kittitas County. I ran my law firm on an almost entirely volunteer basis and WSBA didn't even notice or acknowledge my good work for providing the people in my county access to justice...so why bother...*
- *WSBA would need to make a fundamental shift to be inclusive and welcoming to, and tolerant of, all – not just to social justice and other popular causes. I have no objection to WSBA's support of those causes and support some myself, but WSBA is wholly exclusive, unwelcoming and intolerant of the other side of the coin. If WSBA intends to involve itself in social causes, it should do so equally and impartially.*
- *You are too political. WSBA exists to license and discipline attorneys. Instead of focusing on that, you misuse the organization and compelled license fees to further your political agenda. I have no interest in being a part of that.*

Never Volunteered (137) Responses:

Why do you not volunteer with WSBA? Check all that apply.

	Number Responding	Percentage
Insufficient information, don't know how to get started.	20	15%
Can't right now (too overwhelmed with work, life, etc.).	54	40%
I volunteer elsewhere in the legal community.	43	32%
No time or availability	45	33%
Firm/employer is not supportive of volunteer work.	4	3%
Firm/employer provides volunteer opportunities elsewhere.	5	4%
Not relevant to me, don't see the value.	16	12%
Not aware of opportunities in my geographic area.	24	18%
Don't want to travel for meetings & events.	21	15%
WSBA does not align with my values.	17	13%
I don't see the impact or benefit of the volunteer roles/work	8	6%
Available opportunities are not appealing to me.	14	10%
I think I can make a greater impact elsewhere	34	25%
I like to work directly with the public/those in need.	19	14%
I don't think my training or experience is sufficient	10	7%
Other:	22	16%

Comments:

Does not include less substantive responses such as 'retired.'

- *Afraid of failure on an individual level.*
- *Did not have time to apply this year.*
- *Extensively involved with 12-step organization, church-related service, women's support group, animal rescue*
- *I am in a non-attorney government position and do not feel most of the positions want people who do not run a practice or are doing attorney work. I am a risk/operations director instead.*
- *I am in active service to Alcoholic Anonymous serving Western Washington Area 72*
- *I feel that I already give back to the community through my public service job, and I want to spend my time off work with my family and young daughter.*
- *I resent the WSBA's emphasis on pro bono work for many reasons. I don't feel that WSBA is protective enough of lawyers interests. I work in an underpaid area of lawyer anyway (county pay is \$70/hr. for court visitor and assigned counsel), and I intensely dislike a unified bar.*
- *I volunteer in many non-law areas*
- *I volunteer outside the legal community*
- *I volunteer spare time outside the legal community*
- *I work full-time, am married, have to adult children and one infant grandchild. I'm busy.*
- *I'm heavily involved in pro bono and nonprofit board service*
- *I'm unable to do volunteer work during work hours at my government job, I'm not going to spend my free time doing more legal work for free.*
- *My job is public service*
- *My position as a prosecutor precludes my from volunteer at this time.*
- *The WSBA is a radically left-wing organization, one that no doubt contests that characterization because its leadership lives in a bubble of like-minded people. The organized bar is already out of touch with the majority of state residents; the WSBA is largely disconnected from any views outside a narrow consensus with which I almost completely disagree. The 'opportunities' for volunteer with the Bar are opportunities to work contrary to my beliefs with people I'd rather avoid.*

Do you value volunteering within the legal profession?

	Number Responding	Percentage
Yes	120	90%
No	14	10%

Do you volunteer/donate your time within the legal community?

	Number Responding	Percentage
No	66	49%
Yes. If so, what do you do?	70	51%

Comments are categorized in the following groups:

- *ABA, Federal Bar Association, Other State Bar Associations (5)*
- *Other non-profit organization (2)*
- *Board member (7)*
- *Legal volunteer work - unspecified (7)*

- *Legal Clinic (11)*
- *Non-legal volunteer work (5)*
- *Education/school (3)*
- *Pro bono (30)*
- *Wellness (1)*

In an ideal scenario, what would make you more like to volunteer with WSBA?

- *1 time volunteer opportunities (like a annual wills clinic for indigent people). More organizing with the local bar in our area and local volunteer services (i.e. closer to home/outside king county)*
- *A quick tutorial on what is required of me and how to get started so I feel ready to start*
- *A type of bar membership that did not require publication of my home address and personal phone (since I no longer have an office in retirement).*
- *Ability to apply later than April 20 deadline.*
- *Activities where coordinated through Pro Bono efforts at my employer, making it easy to sign-up to discover.*
- *Allowing me under the rules to volunteer but because of the size of the county and my position I am unable to*
- *An initiative or task force that aligned closely with my other access to justice activities*
- *Appealing volunteer opportunities.*
- *Awareness*
Availability within geographic area
Area of interest
Impactful work
- *Being able to work part time—something that our legal community makes nearly impossible in both the public and private sector. So stupid. You either have to be a full time attorney, or not. Then I could stay healthier and do lots of things I love and value, including volunteer, teach, garden and care for my deteriorating health. there is a stigma to it, which is ridiculous.*
- *Better economic/housing market, allowing me to hire an additional employee, so that I can leave my office for volunteer work.*
- *Clear understanding of the time commitment, shorter term commitments, clearly related to impact*
- *Finish knee surgery, buying house and moving, then I would gladly volunteer*
- *For credit continuing legal education, and volunteering within settings that I can leverage and apply my previous experience.*
- *Good question. Not sure.*
- *Greater interest passion about helping through the practice of law*
- *I am a public sector lawyer and my practice area doesn't readily align with what I understand to be volunteer needs. I also don't have malpractice insurance, so I have been reluctant to handle cases.*
- *I am at the end of my career and want to move into volunteering my time with local community organizations to continue giving back to the community to start a link there that will continue after I retire.*
- *I am licensed but have not been practicing as an attorney. I therefore lack some of the skills that are probably needed for volunteer work. I have been working as a mediator for the past few years, however, and intend to offer time as a volunteer mediator.*
- *I believe WSBA should function as a licensing entity, and it should not be an advocacy or service organization.*
- *I picture myself volunteer as a licensed attorney when I retire from full-time practice. Right now, I can barely accomplish my tasks, personally and professionally, within the confines of my current*

scheduled, given the commitments I have made to various support groups, church, and animal rescue. I admire those who currently volunteer.

- *I probably would not unless someone who I respect reached out to me and asked me personally. Even then, given my other obligations, I would probably politely decline at this point.*
- *I would be more likely to volunteer for WSBA if the organization was less insular, and more open to considering the perspectives besides the current “woke” mentality that is infecting the WSBA.*
- *I would have to find a time machine and become a couple of decades younger. I am approaching my 8th decade and volunteering for nonprofits in legal and technical capacities, about 9 of them in total, is all I can muster, while doing house, yard, bookkeeping, house repairs, you name it.*
- *I’ll volunteer as soon as the WSBA stops forcing DNC talking points down our throats. You become non-political, then I’m in. You want to push the far left agenda, then I’m out.*
- *If the opportunities were more clearly communicated; also if WSBA could develop content to share in-house or a firm, to meet us where we are.*
- *If you stopped charging \$500 annual fees*
- *I’m not interested in the negotiations over policy issues.*
- *In an ideal scenario, the WSBA would be a voluntary organization, and I would not join it.*
- *It would have to be fun.*
- *Knowing how to get involved in shorter ways*
- *Local opportunities on weekends. I don’t really have weekday or night availability because I work full-time and have a toddler*
- *Make volunteerism less of a way of getting complex legal services to people as a way of avoiding unfunded mandates; more financial support given to people who devote their practices to middle and working class families.*
- *More advertising of volunteer opportunities that show how volunteering is making an impact.*
- *No ideal scenario. I have no interest in volunteering with WSBA*
- *None, happier volunteering with food bank and addiction recovery*
- *Nothing, absolutely ZERO interest whatsoever in volunteering, it’s hard enough to make a living and have time for family/friends. I’d rather write a check to organizations I care about.*
- *Nothing. Firmly believe the WSBA to be an awful organization that does little for the legal community or the public and both groups would be better off if the WSBA didn’t exist.*
- *Online volunteering opportunities*
- *Opportunities to those who do not reside in Washington*
- *Opportunities through Zoom or other remote connections*
- *Person to person connection*
- *Recent subject matters are too woke related instead of common sense. The majority of citizens need to understand and be informed of real issues, not issues that are based on political issues that the west side embraces.*
- *Retirement in a couple years may lead to me volunteering in law areas.*
- *Seeing a place for people who have licenses but are in non-attorney positions.*
- *Small projects*
- *Some pro bono legal services for poor members of the community. My employer is concerned that conflicts of interest will be created so they have not authorized it.*
- *Something local in my community connected to local volunteer legal clinics, but that’s not directly with the WSBA. Not sure.*
- *Something near me geographically and that I could do when I had time.*
- *Specific to LPO portion*
- *Stop being hypocritical and self promoting*

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- *Universal peace and prosperity. Otherwise, my volunteer work will not be with the WSBA. There is too much help needed elsewhere.*
 - *Value for rural area practitioners*
 - *Value for the local community*
 - *Wsba would need to do more to serve its members. It's primary mission now seems to be to advance opportunities only for member of diversity and I am not one.*