

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

March 7 Board of Governors Meeting Update from Your At-Large Governors

These are trying times to be a member of the WSBA Board of Governors, and we wanted you to hear our take on what's been happening as a supplement to [the meeting overview WSBA recently sent](#).

Executive Director

As you have probably heard, the Board of Governors voted to terminate the employment of the WSBA's executive director in an executive session in January. All governors were prohibited from reporting the action, which had apparently been planned and orchestrated for some time. We were unaware that the issue would be coming up for a vote. The Personnel Committee (on which we both serve) received no complaints about the executive director's performance, which is where complaints and concerns are supposed to go. No reason has been given for the termination except that WSBA wants to move in a "new direction." There has been no explanation provided by those who supported the decision what that "new direction" looks like, although we and other governors in the minority have asked the question on a number of occasions. The Board of Governors, on advice of counsel, voted again—this time in public session—with the same result (termination) but still without any explanations or reasons. Again without particulars and without basic adherence to the principles of due process, we did not and could not support termination.

The Personnel Committee recommended that the executive director stay on at least through the completion of the [Court's Bar Structure Work Group](#) process. She has a great deal of familiarity with the national-level issues causing bars to reevaluate their structures and would have been a tremendous resource at a time when the landscape for the WSBA will certainly be changing. That recommendation was rejected, on the same 9-4 vote by which the Executive Director was terminated.

An interim Executive Director will soon be appointed, and the search for a new and permanent Executive Director probably won't get underway until the Bar Structure Work Group makes its recommendations and the Court issues its directive regarding the status of WSBA. Even though we are troubled with what has taken place, there is reason to believe that the interim appointment will serve to stabilize what has been a tumultuous set of circumstances. We are committed to making things better.

While these may be trying times to serve on the Board of Governors, we are blessed to have a very hardworking and skilled staff who support and serve our members every day. We have been very impressed by their professionalism and dedication.

Investigations

At the last meeting, the board voted to have an investigator review the claims of Governor Dan Bridges, who has written a letter purporting a million-dollar tort claim against WSBA, the entity for which he currently serves on the governing board. The Supreme Court has also ordered an investigation into staff

claims of a hostile work environment, which has allegedly been created by the conduct of the Board of Governors.

Mandatory Malpractice Insurance

The Mandatory Malpractice Insurance Task Force has made its recommendation in favor of requiring attorneys in private practice to carry insurance. [Click here to learn more.](#) We will continue to consider this issue, which is scheduled for action in May, when the board will be meeting in Yakima.

Board of Governors Elections

Because Athan's term is expiring, we hope someone who will also champion equity and inclusion as well as access to justice in the legal system will come forward serve in the at-large position. [As the continuing at-large Governor, I, Alec, want to step out of our joint report to express my appreciation to Athan for his hard work and dedication and commitment to diversity in all of its forms, and for advancing issues that serve us all.] It is more important than ever to keep these issues front and center on the Board of Governors. The application filing deadline is April 22, and [more information is online.](#) The Board selects among candidates (there is no election). Please reach out to either one of us if you're interested in hearing about our experiences. Recall that at the beginning of this update we stated, "These are trying times to be a member of the WSBA Board of Governors." That should not dissuade you, but encourage you to step forward to share your views and your values in times of trial. Your strength in dealing with issues of diversity and inclusion and fairness and justice is what is always needed. Your voice is essential "in the room where it happens."

As for elections in the open district positions, it is unfortunate that very few members vote in Board of Governors elections, let alone research the candidates. If someone says they support the "new direction," make sure to ask them what that direction looks like—and please let us know! Above all, please vote and be heard.

Questions?

We are always happy to speak with members. Please feel free to reach out if you have questions, concerns, or complaints.

Your Diversity At-Large Governors,

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