

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting I Virtual Only

Thursday, May 26, 2022 | 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 884 6080 9037 | Passcode: 047632 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

AGENDA

1. Introductions, March and April Meeting Recaps, and Approval of March Meeting Minutes (Gov. Abell)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Abell and Julianne Unite)
3. WSBA Career Center Discounts (Sara Niegowski, Chief Communications Officer)
4. Washington Attorney General’s Office of Military and Veteran Legal Assistance (Beatrice Lucas and Madeleine Shojai)
5. Subcommittee Report Updates
 - a. Community, Education, and Outreach (Kari Petrasek, Chair)
 - b. Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)
 - c. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse (Betsy Penoyar, Chair)
6. Bar News Article Update (Allison Foreman)
7. FY23 Committee Budget
8. Committee Applications, Recruiting, and Recommendations Update
9. July Meeting Date
10. Other Business
11. Next Steps/ Conclusion
12. Adjournment

2021 - 2022 STAR Committee Meeting Schedule

October 26, 2021	Meeting: 3 – 5:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
November 18, 2021	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
January 20, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
February 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
March 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
April 21, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
May 26, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
June 16, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
July 21, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
August 18, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
September 15, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: July 16, 2021
as approved by the
WSBA Board of
Governors

Purpose

The WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Committee will work to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing, and thriving.

Practitioners in rural communities are few and far between. Additionally, many of these practitioners are nearing retirement without a clear plan of succession for their clients, leaving a void of access to legal representation and counsel. The STAR Committee will guide policy & program development, serves as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions, and regularly assess the legal landscape in rural communities to determine if WSBA policy, advocacy and program development require further resource for sustainability and improvements.

The STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in General Rule 12. More specifically, GR 12.1 (a) articulates the Washington Supreme Court’s regulatory objective to provide, in part, “meaningful access to justice. . .” while GR 12.1(d) strives for “affordable and accessible legal services.” In addition, the STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in GR 12.2, in particular by providing “services to members and the public,” and “fostering collegiality among its members and goodwill between the legal profession and the public.”

Further, the STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas both by improving access to legal practitioners in rural communities and outreach and development of a pipeline of younger rural residents to pursue a legal career and serve their communities.

Definition of “Rural”

For the purpose of the STAR Committee and reflective of Washington’s unique geographic and socio-geographic landscape, the definition of “rural” is as follows:

Based on the definitions produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS) and an overview of Washington county population, we focused on counties with populations of less than 50,000 and more than 2,500. These areas are considered ‘urban non-metro areas not part of larger labor markets’ by ERS. As part of the working definition, and for ease, we have termed these counties as ‘rural.’ Based upon WA county population data, we’ve pursued a hypothesis that counties with 30,000 or more as rural, but likely more

adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

Composition

Members of the STAR Committee should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will consist of 13 members and are outlined as:

- Chair (voting member)
- 2 Current or Former WSBA Board of Governors Members (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Member At Large (voting member)
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities - see above for definition of "rural" (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member, as defined in WSBA Bylaws (voting member)
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting members, must be currently employed with a WA Law School which is not currently represented on the Committee.)
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP)(voting member).

WSBA Staff Liaison: Member Services and Engagement Manager or staff member in the Advancement Department, non-voting

Board of Governor Liaison: as assigned annually, non-voting.

Terms

- Chair: two-year term
- Members: three-year term

Initial Committee Terms

The first appointments to the STAR Committee should effectuate a staggered rotation of STAR Committee members. Therefore, the following terms are in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Committee member serving an initial term less than three years, should be considered an incomplete term. Therefore, the member is eligible to serve two subsequent complete three-year terms in WSBA Bylaws.

- 2 Active WSBA Members
1 member with two-year term, 1 member with three-year term.
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities (see above for definition)
1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two years term, 2 members with three-years term.
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting, must be currently employed with a WA Law School)
- *1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two-years term, 1 member with three-years term.*

The following positions will begin as a standard term as set forth in this charter.

- Chair
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member

- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

Scope of Work

The scope of the STAR Committee's work will focus on what the WSBA is uniquely positioned to do in supporting a sustaining and thriving environment for the practice of law in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will work with all relevant and interested stakeholders to collaborate where needed. The provision of direct legal services and civil legal aid to the public is outside the scope of the STAR Committee.

Measures of Success

- Increased awareness of the issues and possible solutions to address any gap in practicing members in rural communities.
- A sustainable pipeline of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- Increased numbers of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- The establishment of funding for programs and initiatives for the practice of law in rural communities.

STAR Committee Roles

1. Community Education and Outreach

Coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs, opportunities and benefits of a rural practice. This can include, but should not be limited to, comprehensive information on WSBA's website, features in WSBA publications, presentations at high schools, law schools and community colleges. Meetings and events, such as a summit or symposium, to highlight the issue, convene interested stakeholders to share their concerns and strategize on possible solutions.

2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)

Develop WSBA programming, or WSBA supported/partnered programming designed to build a pipeline of practitioners in rural areas as well as an incentive program to encourage members to explore a rural practice on a time-limited or multi-year timeframe. This role should explore a possible collaboration or strategic overlap with WSBA existing and future mentorship program(s). In particular, this role will require extensive strategic planning and identification of external stakeholder support and additional funding sources. Coordinate with law schools and other stakeholders regarding economic incentives to practice in rural areas.

3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse

Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities in rural communities. This role should include making it easier, and perhaps more cost-effective, to add job postings to WSBA's service. Develop a clearing house to assist retiring members with succession planning and the buying/selling of a practice.

Committee Evaluation

The STAR Committee should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' approval by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Committee to effectuate change in these areas, 2) assessing the scope of work to reflect impact and progress in this area and align with trends in the greater legal community, and 3) earnestly examining if the Committee is necessary to continue the scope of work.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, March 17, 2022, | 12:03 p.m. – 1:35 p.m. *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

Committee Members Present: Allison Foreman, Cindy Yeung, Elizabeth Penoyar, Governor Hunter Abell, Kathryn Burke, Laurie Powers, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire, Sarah Cuellar

Committee Members Absent: Governor Sunitha Anjilvel, Zachary Bryant

WSBA Staff: Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Mike Kroner – Outreach Specialist, Margeaux Green – Practice Management Advisor

Public Attendees: Anna Burica, Lauren McElroy

Introductions, February Meeting Recap, and Approval of February Meeting Minutes (Gov. Abell)

STAR Committee Chair, Governor Hunter Abell, called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. WSBA Staff were called upon to introduce themselves to those in attendance. WSBA Staff Member Mike Kroner advised that the APEX Award deadline for nominations had been extended to April 1. Public Attendee Anna Burica from the Okanogan Bar Association shared that this was her first time in attendance. Governor Abell provided a recap of the February meeting including discussion on the proposed fellowship program, subcommittee reports, and attorney profiles in WSBA Bar News. On motion by STAR Committee Member Elizabeth (Betsy) Penoyar, seconded by STAR Committee Member Allison Foreman, the STAR Committee by unanimous vote (9-0-0) approved the February 2022 meeting minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Abell and Julianne)

Governor Abell advised that Board of Governors (BOG) has continued their discussions on bar restructuring, and it is anticipated to finish these discussions in August. WSBA Staff Liaison, Julianne Unite, reported on policies surrounding in person WSBA events and visits to WSBA offices. The BOG recently voted to amend the current policy toward WSBA volunteers and vaccination/COVID requirements. The amendment now requires a booster shot to be considered fully vaccinated. Julianne will circulate the finalized policy to the Committee when it becomes available. Julianne also advised that masks are no longer required when visiting in person at WSBA offices as WSBA is compliant with King County guidelines. Please reach out to Julianne with any questions regarding this policy. Governor Abell reminded those in attendance of the April 15 deadline for applications to serve as the At-large BOG position, as well as the WSBA President position.

Subcommittee Report Updates

Community, Education, and Outreach (Kari Petrasek, Chair)

Mike advised that the Community, Education, and Outreach Subcommittee discussed subcommittee reorganization and the Ambassador Program Proposal. The subcommittee felt that the Ambassador Program Proposal could display quality of life aspects to rural practice and the ability to have a greater work-life balance. Mike also commented on a secret shopper style program that could allow insight from members on how to make those coming into rural practice more comfortable.

Pipeline Placement Program (Laurie Powers, Chair)

STAR Committee Member Laurie Powers shared that the Pipeline Placement Program Subcommittee will hold standing meetings on the second Tuesday of the month from 2-4 pm. Laurie reported that members spent time processing what the intended purpose and next steps should be. The subcommittee created a vision of what they feel the subcommittee should be. Each subcommittee member is taking a few states from the list that Governor Abell previously provided to review. The subcommittee discussed establishing loan repayment assistance program for rural practice students and an alternative spring break program to send students to rural communities for non-profit or legal aid. There was also discussion of a hybrid law school APR 6 partnership and whether law schools can or would help support this. The subcommittee offered suggestions on rural fellowship and rural mentorship programs. Subcommittee members will do assigned research, and review proposals provided by Betsy and Governor Abell and report their findings at the next STAR Committee meeting.

Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse (Betsy Penoyar, Chair)

Betsy commented that there was some discussion on the reorganization of subcommittees, but the subcommittee felt unsure of how to do that without more defined direction of what the subcommittee is going to accomplish. STAR Committee Member Sarah Cuellar reported that the subcommittee would like to start a stakeholder list serve for members to utilize to for job postings, and other communications respective to this committees' goals. Julianne commented on the WSBA tool that is used for list serves and advised that it would be beneficial to the subcommittee to come up with a clear purpose for the list serve and guidelines for usage which can be communicated to those looking to join. Julianne also advised that WSBA relies on the leaders of the list serve to develop and communicate guidelines to subscribers. Lauren McElroy asked for clarification between the list serve and the WSBA job board: would list serve be only for job opportunities or would the list serve have additional purpose. Sarah advised that the subcommittee envisioned the list serve getting those who are specifically in rural areas together and able to communicate in a more defined space. Sarah will review the information provided by Julianne regarding list serve guidelines, moderation, and usage, and will report back with more information at the next STAR Committee meeting.

Ambassador Program Proposal (Betsy Penoyar)

Betsy reported on the Ambassador Program Proposal that would have six geographical regions and program representatives from each region, with the intent to visit the law schools and present to students. Betsy feels that this would be more direct contact to students. The Program & representatives would present the opportunity to invite students out to their respective areas, show the students around and be a direct point of contact to students. This Program would not put a lot of pressure on law schools, as a majority of the administration would fall to Program representatives. In addition to the Ambassador Program, Betsy hopes to have a webpage that shows benefits of the program as well as a list serve to connect rural practice group, STAR Committee, job opportunities, and students/law schools. Governor Abell commented that he liked that this proposal was geographically centered. Laurie commented that having a speakers bureau identified would work well and it would be important to

work with career services offices in law schools, as well as looking to the law schools for their expertise in what is the best time to contact and how to reach students to gain the best interest. Mike asked for clarification on whether the proposal intended to have 12 representatives visiting each law school at one time. Betsy advised that it could be all 12 or less, depending on availability. Mike commented on further utilizing WSBA's social media presence. STAR Committee Member Cindy Yeung posted an article in the chat - <https://scholarship.law.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1460&context=wlr>. She feels that it would be very helpful in moving forward. STAR Committee Member Rusty McGuire commented that the University of Idaho could also be included in law school presentations. Laurie commented that it would be important to work cohesively with resources that are already in place at the law schools. STAR Committee Member Merf Ehman commented that they felt these were more pieces of what could be done by the committee and felt that we needed a more overall pulled together proposal; that the existing proposals are really implementation ideas. Governor Abell encouraged other Committee members to also submit proposals of their own so that the Committee could come together and create something. Governor Abell invited WSBA staff member Margeaux Green to introduce herself. WSBA Practice Management Advisor Margeaux Green commented that works with solo and small practice attorneys in supporting their business practice.

Posting of Rural Job Opportunities by WSBA (Katie Burke)

STAR Committee Member Kathryn Burke (Katie) commented that WSBA is offering free job posting for prosecutor's offices and that this resource has been very beneficial to her office, which is both understaffed and underfunded. Katie asked if WSBA could possibly extend this offer to all rural practitioners that meet a certain threshold. Julianne commented that WSBA did offer discounts to solo and small firm attorneys to post and could investigate offering a standing discount to rural practitioners. Julianne would need to reach out to Margaret Morgan in WSBA's Communications Department to see what options would be available. Sarah commented that she saw need for both the list serve as well as posting on the WSBA job boards. Sarah advised she would be happy to bring a more complete proposal for the list serve including guidelines, how to join and other details as discussed by Julianne back to the next meeting.

Potential Subcommittee Reorganization (Gov. Abell)

Governor Abell commented on the potential reorganization of the existing subcommittees as there has been a lot of discussion of overlap within subcommittees. Governor Abell opened the floor to Committee members to provide input on whether the subcommittees needed to be reorganized. Betsy commented that she felt they did overlap, but also feels that they should define what each subcommittee is accomplishing before they decide upon reorganization. Laurie commented that she also felt that they needed a bit more time before reorganizing, to allow to determine what goals the Committee is aiming for.

STAR Committee Recruitment and Appointments (Julianne Unite)

Julianne advised that applications are now open on myWSBA for many volunteer positions. Current & upcoming vacancies on the STAR Committee include Chair, Rural Member, Gonzaga Law School Representative, University of Washington Law School Representative, BOG/Former BOG Representative. Julianne also advised that current STAR Committee members may reapply for positions and must do so through the myWSBA portal by April 15.

Rural Justice Collaborative

Julianne referred to the Rural Justice Collaborative (RJC) newsletter in the meeting materials packet starting on page 10 and suggested a possible collaboration with the Rural Justice Collaboration as a resource related to the STAR Committees mission or at the very least as information on what other entities are doing nationally. The RJC is led from the court level rather than bar association level. Governor Abell commented that he found the article helpful for generating ideas.

Other Business

Rusty commented on possibly funding the STAR Committee's initiatives through alternative Business and Occupation Tax payment programs and or whether we could set up a fund with the Washington State Bar (WSB) Foundation to accept donations for the Ambassador Program. Cindy commented on the law review article she provided, which has funding coming cities and counties. Cindy suggested maybe having city and/or municipality representatives in this Committee. Merf commented that they felt that this was a great idea. Julianne advised that WSBA provides staffing for the nonprofit WSBA Foundation that could accept donations but would need to research more specifics and details.

Next Steps/ Conclusion

Next meeting schedule for April 21, from noon-2 p.m.

Adjournment

Governor Abell adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.

DRAFT

TO: WSBA Board of Governors Nominations Committee
President-elect Dan Clark, Co-Chair
Governor Lauren Boyd, Co-Chair

FROM: Name, Position

CC: Paris Eriksen, Volunteer Engagement Advisor

DATE: [MONTH, DAY, YEAR]

RE: **Recommendation(s) for Appointment/Nomination to the [NAME OF ENTITY]**

APPOINT/NOMINATE:

-

Please include here a brief memo that answers the following questions in reasonable detail (i.e., beyond one-word answers):

- 1. Who is on your recommendations team?*
- 2. When did your team meet to determine its recommendations?*
- 3. Did your team interview the applicants? If so, what questions did your team ask?*
- 4. What criteria did your team use to evaluate the applicants, and how were those criteria applied to determine which applicants to recommend?*
- 5. If the Nominations Committee approves the above recommendations, will your entity have any additional appointments or recommendations? If applicable, please share why, if there were more applicants than open opportunities, your entity still seeks to fill further vacancies in the future. For example, perhaps you knew that two applicants had already been selected by another entity or did not meet certain criteria required by court rule such as applicant's home district, occupation, or years of practice.*

For more information regarding this cover memo and the nomination process, please see the next page.

WSBA Board of Governors Nominations Committee Cover Memo and Nominations Process – More Information

1. Purpose of Cover Memo. The purpose of the requested cover memo is to provide the Nominations Committee with information about how each entity’s nominating team conducted its applicant review process and what factors the team considered when selecting those recommended, including how each nomination fits with WSBA’s best practices regarding volunteer engagement, and WSBA’s principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and fairness. (For more information on the latter, see [Guidance for WSBA Committee and Board Nominating Teams](#).)
2. Background of Nominations Committee. In 2016, the WSBA Board of Governors (BOG) delegated approval of nominations and appointments for most WSBA volunteer positions to its [Nominations Committee](#). The Nominations Committee is comprised of seven current BOG members, each appointed by the WSBA President for a one-year term. The staff liaison to the Nominations Committee is WSBA Volunteer Engagement Advisor, Paris Eriksen.
3. Nominations Process. The Nominations Committee takes several types of actions, including the appointment of all members of WSBA committees, boards, councils, and workgroups, and the WSBA representatives of external entities. More details on the nominations process for the latter entities can be found in the [WSBA Boards and Committees Policy](#). Additionally, the Nominations Committee approves and/or nominates applicants to certain Washington Supreme Court-created entities. More details on the nominations process for such court-created entities can typically be found in the relevant court rule.
4. Nominations Committee Action. The Nominations Committee meets monthly and reviews recommendations from various entities’ nominations teams as well as the respective applicant materials. All approvals and nominations made by the Nominations Committee are sent to the entire BOG for review. If an action is flagged for reconsideration by two or more BOG members, the action will be discussed at the next BOG meeting; all other actions will become final one week after being sent to the BOG.

Please contact WSBA staff liaison Paris Eriksen (parise@wsba.org) or a member of the Nominations Committee with any questions.

Small Town and Rural Committee

Volunteer Position Description

The Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee was established by the Board of Governors with approval of its charter in April 2021. The STAR Committee is committed to strengthening and supporting the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. The STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas.

Position overview: The STAR Committee will guide policy and program development, serve as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions that further the goals of strengthening and supporting the practice of law in rural communities. The three main focus areas of the Committee are:

1. Community Education and Outreach
2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)
3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse.

See the Committee charter for more information.

Time commitment: Given that the STAR Committee is focused on and will largely be composed of rural practitioners, attendance to meetings will be primarily and predominantly virtual. As this Committee is new, it is anticipated that meetings in the first year may be monthly for 2 – 2.5 hours for the first quarter, with meetings thereafter being monthly for 60-90 minutes. Subcommittees may meet between meetings and there may be additional work completed by members outside of the meeting schedule.

In accordance with the Charter, the initial terms will be staggered to implement a regular rotation of incoming committee members. After the initial round of appointments, all subsequent appointments will be for a three-year term with eligibility to be reappointed for a second term. Committee Chair will serve a two-year term.

Requirements: Applicants must be active WSBA members, unless otherwise stated in the charter. One emeritus pro bono position is available. There are no requirements for years of practice or practice area. Applicants should be committed to advancing WSBA's mission to serve the public and champion justice, through pro bono and public service-oriented opportunities. A willingness to attend and participate in the meetings and workgroups is required.

Preferred qualifications and skills: Interest and/or experience practicing law in Washington's rural communities and/or developing a practitioner pipeline to support growth of legal practitioners in rural communities. Applicants should be solution-oriented, collaborative, and dedicated to Washington's rural communities.

Benefits:

- Develop and contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique needs, opportunities, and benefits of a rural practice
- Opportunity to explore creative solutions.
- Create connections, build relationships, and network with practitioners in Washington's rural communities as well as law students and members of the public.

- Enhance leadership development through program development, project management, and committee work

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

Selection and appointment process: The initial group of candidates will be reviewed and nominated by the current Rural Practice Project Team which consists of staff, members of the Board of Governors, WSBA members, Washington Young Lawyers Committee members, and law school representatives. Subsequently, candidates will be reviewed by a team including the committee chair, staff liaison, and BOG liaison. Recommendations are made to the Board of Governor's Nominations Committee, which makes the final appointments.

For further information: <https://www.wsba.org/connect-serve/committees-boards-other-groups/small-town-and-rural-committee>

How to apply: See instructions at www.wsba.org/joincommittee. Questions about the application? Email barleaders@wsba.org.



NWSidebar

The Voices of Washington's Legal Community



Why Young Attorneys Fear Working in Rural Areas and Why They Shouldn't

*March 22,
2022*



When the towns of Malden and Pine City were destroyed by fire in 2020, the residents were left with nothing and are still trying to pick up the pieces.

They need help dealing with government agencies and state agencies—and I get calls daily for assistance. Most can't afford an attorney but they still need the help. The need actually has increased with the housing crisis since some of the houses in rural areas are less than \$100,000, making them affordable for people moving from larger towns, and they still have the same legal needs as they would in an urban area.

We struggle to hire and retain lawyers in rural areas for several reasons. Usually it has to do with spouses and employment opportunities. The rural areas are then left with no attorney assistance.

The newest challenge is the cultural differences between rural and urban people. We hear now from students that they don't want to work or reside "out there with those people." That is based on social media and cable news exaggerating the differences between the rural and urban settings.

Social media and cable news. It's not real. Davenport is 20 minutes from Lake Roosevelt and the majority of the residents there are from urban communities. I meet with them daily in my practice and they all laugh when asked what the perception was versus reality. Most have lived here for years or are COVID refugees and will never leave.

When we do hire attorneys, they are encouraged to live here in the rural communities and become members of the bigger community by joining local service organizations, churches, or sports leagues. Rural clients want to know you are shopping local and living local. It can be a shock for young attorneys to run into their clients in a grocery store or while playing basketball, but it creates a connection deeper than a one-off meeting.

I was raised on a farm homesteaded by my great-grandparents in 1883. I attended school in Rosalia, then did my undergraduate work at Eastern Washington University and law school at the University of Idaho before starting practice in 1989.

Our office began in Davenport in the 1930s and has expanded to acquire practices in Odessa, Ritzville, St. John, Rosalia, and Colfax. I practice in the areas that surround agricultural production, transition planning, tax planning, estate planning, and probate.

For someone like myself, the strangest thing is meeting a group of law students who are fearful of practicing in rural areas because they don't know what needs the clients have. I assure them the needs are the same but the clients might drive a tractor or combine instead of a car. They might have boots that smell of cow pasture but have real needs such as acquiring real estate, wills, and planning. The misconception is that there is something different about the people and many young students don't feel comfortable working in an area that doesn't have a nearby Starbucks, or other urban staples.

I often find myself perplexed by the fact that law students are worried about the political leanings of people who live here. Most rural clients are proud, independent, and conservative. They would also give you the shirt off their back if you needed it. I have a married gay couple who I have worked with for years who live here and, at first, were fearful of their neighbors with conservative views. They were shocked when, year after year, those same neighbors kept their driveway clear after snowstorms. And they are now dear friends.

Learn More about the Star Committee

The WSBA Small Town and Rural Practice (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Visit the [STAR Committee page](#) to learn more and find out how to attend its next meeting.

Perceptions can be dangerous. I recently did a will for a young Ukrainian who was going to assist in the evacuation effort. Within days we had raised funds for him by visiting the local tavern and passing the hat for funds. Perceptions perplex me since they are not accurate and, more often, are more dangerous than the truth.

About the Author



L.R. "Rusty" McGuire. Rusty advises clients in all aspects of elder law, estate planning, and estate administration. He also has extensive knowledge in all areas of agricultural law, including estate and tax planning for families, family corporations, and partnerships. Rusty guides families dealing with farm and business issues during the transition of generations. He also advises families on farm real estate transaction planning, and on planning and appeals dealing with Federal farm programs administered by FSA and NRCS.

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18h

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Robert Chang

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Representation matters!

<https://twitter.com/WASStateBar/status/1516129581815717895>

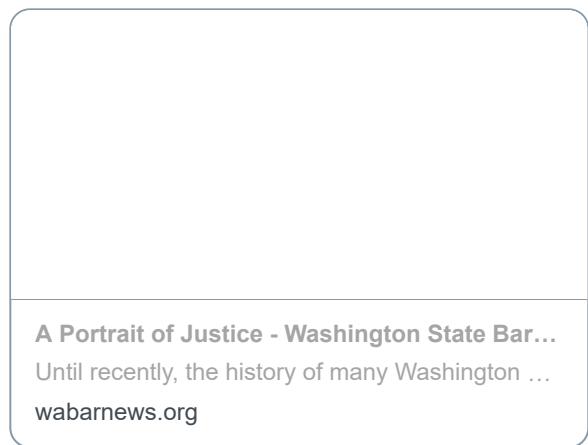
20h



Washington State Bar Association

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A Portrait of Justice: Take a look at some of the newest Supreme Court Justice portraits. ow.ly/72uV50IKXXL



21h

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