

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

**Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting | Virtual Only**

**Thursday, June 22, 2023, | 12:30 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.**

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 879 0573 6111 | Passcode: 811616 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

## AGENDA

1. Introductions, March Meeting Recap, and Approval of May Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
  - a. Committee Applications
3. Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)
4. Discussion of Rural Practice Mobile Unit
5. FY24 STAR Committee Activities and Budget (Gov. Kari Petrasek and Julianne Unite)
6. Financial Project Team Discussion
7. Announcements
8. Other Business
9. Next Steps/ Conclusion
10. Next Meeting: July 26
11. Adjournment

# 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

**Saturday, May 6, 2023 | 12:35 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.**

*Virtual meeting via Zoom*

**Committee Members Present:** Governor Kari Petrasek, Hunter Abell, Kathryn Burke, Sarah Cuellar, Elizabeth Penoyar, Laurie Powers, Erin Lloyd

**Committee Members Absent:** Allison Foreman, Merf Ehman, Zachary Bryant, Erin Fullner, Rusty McGuire

**WSBA Staff Present:** Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Kevin Plachy – Advancement Department Manager

**WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons:** Governor Sunitha Anjilvel

**Public Attendees Present:** Blanca Rodriquez, WSBA President Dan Clark

## Introductions, March Meeting Recap, and Approval of March Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

Governor Kari Petrasek called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. and thanked those in attendance in-person for making the meeting successful. Kari asked those in attendance to provide introductions. On motion by Committee Member Laurie Powers, seconded by Committee Member Kathryn (Katie) Burke, by unanimous vote the committee approved the March meeting minutes.

## WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

- a. Committee Applications – WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that the deadline has been extended until June 2. If interested parties have not applied yet, please do so for any committees you may be considering. Julianne added that the at large position, Seattle University law position and a rural community seat will need to be re-applied for, if members plan to continue with the STAR Committee. Committee Member Hunter Abell advised that applications for the WSBA president elect have closed, and that Sunitha Anjilvel was the only applicant.
- b. STAR Committee Presentation at May BOG Meeting – Committee Member Merf Ehman and Kari will be doing a presentation at the BOG meeting, updating them on the STAR committee and its progress at the BOG meeting on May 19 -20, 2023. The report submitted is on page nine of the meeting materials.

## Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)

- c. Kari asked for an update from Laurie regarding the job fair, Laurie commented that they do not have information to report back at this time. Kari asked if they were planning on doing an additional fair in the fall; Laurie commented that they would not do on for law students but could possibly do something for lawyers/firms and graduates. Kari asked if law schools would be able to help facilitate a job fair that is less focused on students, or if there would need to be additional support required of the WSBA. Laurie advised that she need to speak with her team but would be open if there is an interest and need.
- d. Kari asked for a report from Committee Member Elizabeth (Betsy) Penoyar; nothing to report at this time.

## CLE Recap – (Kevin Plachy, Katie Burke, Rusty McGuire, President-elect Hunter Abell, Gov. Kari Petrasek)

WSBA Advancement Director, Kevin Plachy, encouraged those in attendance to review the survey information that is within the meeting materials packet regarding the STAR Committee's rural CLE. Kevin reported that there were over 1200 people in attendance at the event. Kevin also commented that now that they have laid the foundation of the groundwork of the committee with this first CLE, that he feels many of those in attendance are interested in learning more about working and living in rural practice areas. Also found it interesting that some people were not even aware of the gaps and inaccessibility of legal representation in rural areas. Kevin advised that he has spoken with Shanthi Raghu, WSBA Education Programs Manager, and requested that the WSBA CLE team hold one legal lunchbox date for the STAR Committee to host a free CLE to further awareness.

Katie commented that she read the comments from the CLE results and felt that there were a lot of great pieces of feedback. Katie mentioned that Pilar, who is in attendance today, was at the CLE and connected with Katie, suggested some sort of mobile unit. Katie recommended this as an agenda item. Katie recommended that the STAR Committee partner with other local bar committees and minority bar associations, other underrepresented groups to pair with interested parties who may have specific questions. WSBA Board of Governors Liaison, Sunitha Anjilvel, commented that the committee should also connect with the Diversity Council to help connect with members of underrepresented communities. Hunter commented that a CLE that addressed the questions of safety, what would life be like, what else does it offer would be a good topic. Hunter also commented that was very impressed with the education component of the CLE. Kevin commented on Legal Lunchbox, but this committee could also do another CLE mirroring this first and hold two in a one-year timeframe. Kevin shared that he was in favor of connecting with minority bar associations as suggested by Katie. WSBA has a direct connection to minority bar associations via list serves, so connecting and recruiting would be easy to start.

## Recruitment of Rural Practice Attorneys (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

Kari received an email from WSBA Board of Governors President, Dan Clark, regarding a program that is taking place in North Dakota. President Clark also highlighted the crisis currently taking place in Yakima, County, in which public defender offices, legal aid offices are experiencing a large shortage in attorneys.

Kari advised that this is something that could come into play when discussing the FY24 budget; giving a stipend to rule 9 interns, etc. Hunter commented that previously the committee had put together a three-step plan and that what is taking place in North Dakota seems to fall into the third category of that plan. Pilar asked in the chat if Kari was referring to “the North Dakota program to help recent law grads pay back student loans in exchange for working rural areas of the state?” Kari clarified the details of the program as defined in the meeting materials. Pilar commented that she would put together a proposal to show how the mobile legal unit would work in Washington for the committee to review. Pilar also commented that connecting with the minority bar associations would be an excellent idea for the committee. She advised that in New Mexico, there are many minority attorneys that work in public defenders’ associations, and it is always a positive experience to have them. Laurie commented that Gonzaga has recently started a drop-in advice clinic, that has plans to go mobile as well. Laurie also commented on having the stipend for living expenses, and that if the WSBA had funds then the law schools may be encouraged to contribute to a living stipend. Laurie feels this would work well for students and firms who have paid internships but still have trouble finding students to take them. Laurie also suggested that maybe other sections would be interested in contributing based on specific practice area, like the funding that is done by Labor and Employment Law Section. Kari commented that the SSP has considered giving scholarships, etc., and will return to the Solo and Small Practice Section to share this thought.

Julianne commented that there is a mobile clinic that spans Washington and Oregon, and if the STAR committee continued to consider the mobile clinic, that she would like to invite them to attend for input and support. Julianne also commented that the MSE team also provides liaison to the sections and would be able to discuss with sections through WSBA Channels. JU also reminded the committee of the WSBA Foundation that could also provide additional funding for stipends. Pilar commented that those with disabilities face even more access to justice issues and partnering with Washington TAP could be another source of fundraising assistance. Kevin commented that Solo, RPPT and Family Law would be the most germane for this product. Kevin suggested to do targeted invites to those sections specifically. Hunter commented on including Native American tribes and would be beneficial to build bridges to include them as a resource. Hunter also commented on looking into outreach to timber companies general counsel and other private companies, that could help make the community stronger. Blanca Rodriguez, NW Justice Project, commented that about the delivery services committee, created a needs assessment for Yakima, and found that immigration law is also underrepresented, like Family Law. Blanca also recommended connecting with the Access to Justice board. Family Law, Immigration and employment were the main areas of needs to the community in Yakima. It was also found that there is a sincere lack of information and awareness of resources within the community. Julianne commented that the questions that were answered in the early planning stages (pre-pandemic) would be a great starting point for the committee but would likely need some adjustments based on changes post-pandemic. Laurie commented on including discussion on opportunities for family, friends, etc.; that would be living in the area with the legal professional. Pilar asked if rural communities in Washington state had anything like a “Main Street program” which are often federally funded to fix small towns? WSBA Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Chelle Gegax, provided a link in the chat - <https://dahp.wa.gov/local-preservation/main-street-program>. Katie asked if this might be a topic that would be suitable for a project team/work group – to assemble a list of potential groups/organizations showing what they could get out of participating in the project and why, and then bringing that list back to the committee for further discussion. Kari agreed that this would make a good work group topic and



asked for volunteers to join. Hunter agreed to join, Pilar agreed to join, Katie agreed to join, and Sunitha volunteered to join. Hunter commented that while discussing partnerships, that the committee may want to seek approval from General Counsel regarding fundraising. Kevin commented that the WSBA cannot do fundraising, but it can be done through the WSBA Foundation.

## FY24 STAR Committee Activities and Budget (Gov. Kari Petrusek and Julianne Unite)

Julianne commented on the proposed budget for FY24, sharing that there was \$10,000 for the committee. Kevin commented that it would be most beneficial to have a firm draft of the budget ready for the next BOG committee meeting. Kevin also commented that if the committee was planning something like the pipeline program, etc., that the proposal should be professional in presentation and should likely be presented to the board with the budget. Kari commented that creating a financial payment stipend program for FY24, possibly including the list of other entities who would provide donations would be a good thing to present to the BOG. Kari asked for feedback from committee members on whether they felt that the committee would need additional funding beyond the proposed \$10,000. Laurie commented that the proposed summit would be best if planned for May of 2024. The committee discussed logistics of hosting a summit and related expenses. Laurie suggested possibly hosting a meeting in conjunction with the summit to help aid in expenses. Kari asked if committee members felt that it would be better to put majority of the budget into the proposed summit idea, or would it be best if the committee held more in-person meetings as well as the summit. Hunter recommended that doing in person events should continue, in addition to the summit. Hunter also recommended that the committee budget be increased to \$15,000 to accommodate both options. On motion by Katie, seconded by Sunitha, by unanimous vote the committee approved to request a budget of \$15,000 for FY24. Kari asked committee members to consider other impacts that would affect the budget to be discussed at the next meeting.

### Creation of Financial Project Team Discussion

Kari asked for volunteers to be on a workgroup that focuses on financial issues the committee may face. (Loan forgiveness, etc.) Merf, who is not in attendance today, initially suggested the creation of the committee. Katie suggested sending an email to all members, including those not in attendance, to gauge interest.

### Announcements

None discussed.

### Other Business

None discussed.

### Next Steps/ Conclusion

Kari discussed the outreach event scheduled in the afternoon. Julianne reported that there were approximately nine RSVP'd from Team Child, Yakima County Superior Court, and more. Those who

RSVP'd expected to discuss strategies for recruiting and retaining legal staff in rural areas, short- and long-term strategies for extreme attorney shortage, Law Clerk program, ideas and action items, partnership to act on attorney shortage, etc. Hunter suggested that including brief introductions of WSBA Staff, BOG Members, and other committee members followed by organic discussion. Katie suggested using the repeated questions given by those who rsvp'd and address what has been done currently and what is being planned.

### Next Meeting: June Date TBD

Kari advised that meetings are typically the last Wednesday of the month, however she will not be available for the scheduled June meeting. Kari asked the committee members if they would be available on a different day that week. Kari suggested either Monday, June 26 or Friday, June 30. Members discussed availability and asked that Julianne send a poll to committee members to finalize.

### Adjournment

Kari asked for additional comments, no responses from members. Adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

DRAFT