

Public Service Connection

A Newsletter of the Washington State Bar Association



The WSBA should use existing programs, and should implement new programs, to improve our members' level of satisfaction with their lives and with the practice of law. In order to implement this goal, the WSBA will work to enhance the culture of service within the WSBA membership.

New Stuff

WSBA referendum proposes big changes; calls on WSBA members to vote

Recently, a member referendum was filed with WSBA's executive director calling for a vote of the WSBA membership. It requests that the Board of Governors' decision to keep 2013 license fees the same for the fourth consecutive year be repealed, and that 2013 license fees be dropped from \$450 to \$325. On March 7, electronic ballots will be sent to the Active membership, with paper copies sent to those without valid email addresses on file.

Members will have until April 6 to vote. To pass or defeat this referendum requires a majority vote of those Active members voting. Below are some facts about WSBA's member referendum process, your WSBA license fee, and the potential impact of the proposed referendum.

- WSBA's member referendum process is the avenue by which any Active member of the Bar can affect policy set by the Board of Governors. A referendum can reverse or modify a final action taken by the Board of Governors, enact a resolution, or amend the WSBA Bylaws. Any Active member may file a petition for a referendum if it meets the criteria laid out in the WSBA Bylaws. To pass, a referendum requires a majority of those Active members voting.
- The WSBA license fee of \$450 has been set the same for four consecutive years (2010–2013). The Board voted unanimously in 2011 to keep the fee the same in 2013, despite continued growth of the membership and budget pressure.
- WSBA is both a regulatory agency and trade association. Washington is one of 32 states with a mandatory bar. The other 18 pay a license fee to the Supreme Court and additional fees for a bar membership. WSBA serves nearly 30,000 active members and is charged with regulating the profession as well as providing valuable services and programs to members and the public.
- Paying your annual license fee is the equivalent of obtaining a business license. Many other professions require an annual license fee to practice in our state. While a number of professions pay less, there are many that annually pay more. For instance, midwives pay \$525, chiropractors pay \$607, and dentists pay \$576.
- Washington's license fees are on par, when looking at other state bar associations that perform regulatory functions. Of the 32 mandatory state bars in the country, Washington's license fees rank near the middle among those states with comparable membership size (e.g., Michigan, Wisconsin, Georgia). By comparison here in our region, Oregon and Alaska, also mandatory bars, have annual license fees of \$492 (Oregon) and \$660 (Alaska).
- Reducing the license fee to \$325 is equivalent to what was collected a decade ago when WSBA membership was 28 percent smaller with fewer programs and services offered. A cut in license fees of this magnitude equates to a 26 percent budget cut, or \$3.6 million, putting numerous programs and services at risk for cuts or elimination.

Please look for your ballot to arrive electronically or in the mail. Every vote counts. For more information on the License Fee Referendum, go to www.wsba.org/referendum.

All WSBA members are invited to an upcoming Member Town Hall to voice your opinions on the proposed Limited License Practitioner Rule, formerly called the Legal Technician Rule.

What: Member Town Hall — Proposed Legal Technician Rule

When: Thursday, February 23, 2:00–5:00 p.m.

Where: WSBA-CLE Conference Center
1501 4th Ave., Ste. 308, Seattle

In June 2012, the Washington Supreme Court is expected to vote on this rule that is substantively the same as the rule proposed by the Practice of Law Board to the Supreme Court in 2008, but never acted on. It would authorize non-lawyers who meet certain educational requirements to advise clients on certain areas of law.

The Board of Governors opposes this rule, and they are interested in hearing your viewpoints both for and against the concept of licensing non-lawyers. Attend the session either in person or via webcast and make your comments known.

An RSVP is required, and seating is limited to the first 140. You may also participate via webcast (limited to the first 500 who RSVP). For more information, a link to the proposed rule, and to RSVP, go to www.wsba.org/lptownhall.

Are you an attorney looking for a volunteer opportunity? Do you want a new pro bono project? WSBA is pleased to announce the launch of www.ProBonoWa.org, an on-line pro bono opportunity directory designed to link attorneys with legal services organization offering opportunities to serve low- and moderate-income clients in need of legal assistance. Visit www.probonowa.org today to get involved in your community!



Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project

The Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project is a partnership between WSBA and the Northwest Justice Project which provides pro bono legal assistance to Washington homeowners facing foreclosure. Interested in volunteering? Sign up at www.mywsba.org.

We are excited to invite Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project pro bono attorneys to attend a **day-long training about the Foreclosure Fairness Act and foreclosure prevention mediation advocacy**. As part of the WSBA's strategic goal to enhance the culture of service among its members, we are pleased to offer this free seminar as part of a training series that will support volunteers participating in public service projects and initiatives. We value your partnership in serving low- and moderate-income Washington families — thank you!

“Mediation Advocacy: Representing Homeowners under the Foreclosure Fairness Act”

When: 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Tuesday, February 28 (6 CLE credits pending, including .5 ethics)

Where: WSBA Conference Center (1501 4th Ave., Ste. 308, Seattle) or webcast from your office

Please visit [WSBA's Public Service Training page](#) for additional program details and [online registration](#). Registration requires login and authentication that you have signed up to participate on the Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project pro bono panel.

Questions? Please contact Public Service Training Coordinator [Sean Kennedy](#).

Special Instructions for Non-WSBA Attendees: We are pleased to offer a limited number of live and webcast seats for housing counselors, mediators, and law students to attend this live or webcast FFA Mediation Advocacy training. To facilitate the registration process, housing counselors, non-attorney mediators, and law students must contact Sean Kennedy for access to a unique online registration link.

Foreclosure Mediation Advocacy Training in Snohomish County: Please join us for a half-day training in Everett on March 20, 2012. (This CLE was originally scheduled for January 20 and has been rescheduled due to the inclement weather in the Puget Sound region in January.) The training will be held at the Everett Firefighters Hall (2411 Hewitt Ave., Everett) at 1:00 p.m. Please contact WSBA Public Service Program Manager [Catherine Brown](#) for registration details. Special thanks to the Everett Firefighters for their generous venue donation to accommodate this training.

Special thanks to Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project pro bono attorneys **Brendan Donckers, Margie Baran, Frank Ricketts,** and **Andrew Makar,** private attorney **Chris Kerl,** and Northwest Justice Project staff attorney **Joseph Jordan** for partnering with Seattle University's Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Practicum law students to represent Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project clients in mediation!



Moderate Means Program

Formed through a partnership between WSBA and the law schools of Gonzaga University, Seattle University, and the University of Washington, the Moderate Means Program (MMP) is a statewide reduced-fee lawyer referral service for moderate-income families and individuals in Washington state. Sign up at www.mywsba.org today to get involved.

Special thanks to the 347 Washington attorneys who have signed up to participate with the Moderate Means Program (MMP). Please watch your inboxes for case referrals! We expect the number of case referrals to increase as law students begin to refer MMP housing cases in the next month.

Need free training? As part of WSBA's commitment to enhancing the culture of service among members, we are developing substantive, skills-based training to support attorneys participating in the Moderate Means Program, the Home Foreclosure Legal Aid Project and WSBA's Emeritus membership status. During the fall and winter 2011, we met with many of you during focus groups in six counties around the state. We were excited by all the great ideas we heard from you about what kind of substantive training is most relevant to the practice of family law for low and moderate income clients. We've been developing and recording an on-line family series of courses and expect the first trainings to be available beginning in March. Please visit WSBA's Public Service Training web page for a list of these trainings and come back often as we will continually update this page with new live and recorded course offerings. For more information about how to get involved with the Moderate Means Program, visit the Public Service Volunteer Opportunities page or contact WSBA's Public Service Program Manager, Catherine Brown.

An extra special thanks to our Public Service Family Law Training Series faculty - Eastside Legal Assistance Program Staff Attorneys, **Brandy Andersson** and **Juanita Cope**.

Save the Date! Our first live family law Public Service training will be on **March 13** and will cover parenting plans and effective strategies when working with guardians ad litem. Visit our [Public Service Training webpage](#) for additional detail and links to live and webcast course registration.



Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee

WSBA's Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee (PBLAC) activities promote and encourage pro bono service and address the administration of justice as it affects indigent persons. Please visit the WSBA website for more information about [PBLAC](#) or to volunteer for a [WSBA committee, board, or panel](#).

Interested in serving on the Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee? WSBA is accepting applications now! Submit your Committee Application by March 12, 2012, for a two-year term beginning in October 2012. PBLAC meets the second Thursday of each month at 12:00 p.m. at the WSBA offices with a call-in option for telephone participation. Want to learn more about PBLAC's current projects before applying? Visit [PBLAC's webpage](#) on the WSBA website for information about the Committee's accomplishments, initiatives, and to read PBLAC's meeting minutes. Need more info? Contact WSBA staff liaison Catherine Brown at catherineb@wsba.org or 206-733-5905, or one of PBLAC's two co-chairs, [Andrea Axel](#) and [Joanna Otero](#).

Interested in serving on another WSBA committee board or panel? Check out the [WSBA Volunteer Opportunities webpage](#).

WYLD

Washington State Bar Association
YOUNG LAWYERS DIVISION

Washington Young Lawyers Division

Read about the [WYLD programs](#) and [contact a chair](#) to learn about current projects and opportunities to volunteer.

The WYLD Public Service/Pro Bono Committee needs you! The Committee's mission is to serve as an incubator for new pro bono service opportunities and to provide information and tools to help connect new lawyers with service opportunities. Committee meetings are held via conference call the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Get involved and help to shape WYLD's involvement in pro bono and public service initiatives. Contact Committee Chair [Ben Nivison](#) or Chair-elect [Alicia Levy](#) for additional details. We would appreciate your assistance in helping us develop and implement project ideas that support our mission!

Special thanks to WYLD Public Service/Pro Bono Committee members **Cat Reny** and **Alicia Levy** for their help in developing www.probonowa.org, the online pro bono opportunity directory designed to link attorneys with legal services organizations offering pro bono volunteer opportunities.

Get involved with a WYLD service opportunity! The Washington First Responder Will Clinic, Mock Trial Program Partnership, and Yakima Pre-Law Student Leadership Conference all need volunteers. Most committees hold open monthly meetings and include a conference call option so new and young lawyers throughout the state can participate.

News and Resources

Note: The WSBA does not promote, sponsor, or otherwise endorse the trainings or programs listed herein. This list is intended for informational purposes only.

“\$25B Settlement Reached over Foreclosure Abuses,” by Derek Kravitz. A landmark \$25 billion settlement with the nation’s top mortgage lenders was hailed by government officials Thursday as long-overdue relief for victims of foreclosure abuses. <http://bit.ly/y7wENr>

“Deal Is Closer for a U.S. Plan on Mortgage Relief,” by Shaila Dewan and Nelson D. Schwartz. With a deadline looming on Monday for state officials to sign onto a landmark multibillion-dollar settlement to address foreclosure abuses, the Obama administration is close to winning support from a crucial state that would significantly expand the breadth of the deal. <http://nyti.ms/xyJJdG>

“Empty, Foreclosed Houses Burden Cities, Neighborhoods,” by Sanjay Bhatt. On a Monday morning last October, Covington police knocked on the door of a house in foreclosure. They got no response. <http://bit.ly/zdHdAv>

“Mortgage Relief Plan Aims at Refinancing,” by Shaila Dewan. President Obama, in announcing new mortgage relief on Wednesday, acknowledged that previous efforts to help homeowners had fallen short of expectations. <http://nyti.ms/yUxmKb>

“President to Offer Way for Easing Home Debt,” by Binyamin Appelbaum. The White House plans to propose legislation that could allow a few million homeowners to reduce monthly mortgage payments by refinancing their current loans into new ones guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration. <http://nyti.ms/xBYYzr>

“States Negotiate \$26 Billion Agreement for Homeowners,” by Nelson D. Schwartz and Shaila Dewan. After months of painstaking talks, government authorities and five of the nation’s biggest banks have agreed to a \$26 billion settlement that could provide relief to nearly two million current and former American homeowners harmed by the bursting of the housing bubble, state and federal officials said. <http://nyti.ms/xGrxZG>

“State’s Share of Mortgage Settlement: \$648 Million,” by Sanjay Bhatt. Washington stands to get \$648 million under the \$25 billion national settlement with five of the nation’s biggest mortgage servicers announced Thursday. <http://bit.ly/wxO6mK>

Contact Us

News, please! Do you have success stories, newsworthy items, or additional information for the next *Public Service Connection*? Please send them to the WSBA at publicservice@wsba.org.

Share the *Connection*! Do you know someone who might be interested in receiving an electronic copy of the *Public Service Connection* every month? We’d love to add them to our list serve. Interested individuals can send their name and email address to publicservice@wsba.org.

A special thanks to our volunteers! We appreciate your dedication to service, and we value your partnership as we expand the menu of public service opportunities throughout the Washington state legal community.