

Member Status Workgroup – Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2024, 3:30PM– 4:45PM

Members Present

- Kari Petrasek, Chair
- Francis Adewale, WSBA Treasurer
- Steve Crossland, Active Member from the Senior Lawyers Section
- Kathleen Pierce (inactive), Inactive/Judicial or Honorary Member
- Althea Paulson, Pro Bono Member
- P.J. Grabicki, At-Large Member

WSBA Liaisons and Staff Present

- Renata de Carvalho Garcia, RSD Director
- Bobby Henry, RSD Associate Director
- Anne Trent, RSD Paralegal

Call to Order

The Chair confirmed all members present. Meeting called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Members and WSBA staff introduced themselves.

Scope of work, timeframe, and expectations

Kari provided some background information as to why the workgroup was created including requests from WSBA members that a “retired” status be created. Essentially, the feedback received so far is that members leaving the profession do not want to change their status to inactive or voluntarily resign for various reasons including the negative connotations of “resigned” and similarity to “resigned in lieu of disbarment”. Currently, the only way to be granted honorary status is to be a retired judicial officer or an attorney with over 50 years of experience. The workgroup is tasked with exploring different statuses and may consider amending the WSBA Bylaws to incorporate a new status for retired attorneys.

Phase 1: Evaluate current status options

- Overview of current member statuses

The WSBA administers the admission and licensing of Washington licensed legal professionals on behalf of and under rules adopted by the Washington Supreme Court. Licensed legal professionals may choose a different license status in accordance with the WSBA Bylaws.

Active	Inactive	Judicial	Honorary	Pro Bono	Disability Inactive
\$458	\$200	\$50	No fee	\$200/\$0*	No fee

Unrestricted license to practice law	Not permitted to practice law	May practice law only if permitted by the CJC	Not permitted to practice law	Practice limited to pro bono services through QLSP	Not permitted to practice law
		Must hold qualified judicial or adjudicative position	Must have been on active or judicial status for 50 years		

* The \$200 pro bono license fee can be waived for pro bono status members who completed at least 30 hours of pro bono service in the previous year.

Eligibility for the different license statuses as well as the processes and requirements to change to another license status are set by the WSBA Bylaws.

- It was noted that inactive status is used for many reasons including as a way for those licensed in another state to return to active status in Washington at a later time.
- It was also noted that members can voluntarily seek disability inactive status, but it is unclear at this time if the workgroup will be looking into this status.

Initial ideas and considerations:

- Some members may continue practicing despite serious cognitive problems because they want to achieve honorary status which could harm clients. Should the workgroup recommend lowering the number of years required for honorary status?
 - o Option 1: consider reducing the number of years required for honorary status to 30 or 40 years.
 - o Option 2: consider creating a different status for people with 30 or 40 years of practice.
- Some members leaving the practice may want to be involved in a limited capacity but find the cost – and requirements - of maintaining an active license too burdensome.
 - o Option 1: consider creating a status specific for members who want to practice part-time.
 - o Option 2: consider an age cut off, similar to other states, where members of a certain age pay a lower license fee or no license fee at all.
- Public protection: It is important that the public and the courts know when someone is permitted to practice law and to what extent.

Phase 2: Seek input from impacted groups

Identify who, how and when:

- The workgroup inquired as to the reason members leave (and return to) active status, but it was explained that this is not something the WSBA asks members to disclose so no data can be shared.
- The workgroup discussed the importance of understanding the problem before discussing potential solutions and transitioned to data gathering.
- **Next steps:**
 - o WSBA staff to send a survey to all members, including inactive and pro bono, asking for feedback. Give a short (two-week) response time.
 - o WSBA staff to compile data on license status offered at other state bars, preferably mandatory bars of similar size.
 - o WSBA staff to obtain the data used by the Pro Bono and Public Service Committee a few

years ago when changes were made to the pro bono status.

Closing and next meeting

Review and discuss the data collected from other states regarding their license statuses and, if available, review responses to the survey that will be sent to members.

Staff will send out a survey to determine what dates work for the majority of the group for our next meetings. Workgroup decided that meeting about every 3 weeks is best given the short turnaround time this workgroup has to make a recommendation.