

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES

Shelton, WA

March 21-22, 2025

[Call to Order and Welcome \(link\)](#)

The meeting of the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) was called to order by President Sunitha Anjilvel on Friday, March 21, at 1:02 p.m. Governors in attendance were:

Chris Bhang
Mary Rathbone
Matthew Dresden
Tom Ahearne
Kevin Fay
Kristina Larry
Todd Bloom
Nam Nguyen
Allison Widney
Jordan Couch
Kari Petrasek
Emily Arneson
Parvin Price
Alain Villeneuve

Officers and Executive Staff in attendance were President Sunitha Anjilvel, President-Elect Francis Adewale, Immediate-Past President Dan Clark, Executive Director Terra Nevitt, Chief Communications and Outreach Officer Sara Niegowski, Director of Finance Tiffany Lynch, Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata Garcia, Director of Advancement Kevin Plachy, Chief Equity & Justice Officer Diana Singleton, General Counsel Laurie Powers, Deputy Director Dua Abudiab, Chief Disciplinary Counsel Doug Ende and HR Director & Chief Culture Officer Glynnis Klinefelter Sio.

Also in attendance were Ann Christian, Aziza Ozgoren, Betsylew Miale-Gix, Brent Williams-Ruth, Bob Boruchowitz, Bonnie Sterken, Carolyn MacGregor, Catherine Schur, George Yeannakis, Greg Lamm, Follis Stark, Jennifer Olegario, Julianne Unite, Kalin Bornemann, Liz Mustin, Maialisa Vanyo, Melissa Bailey,

Nancy Hawkins, Paris Eriksen, Raina Wagner, Rex Nolte, Sharon Sakamoto, Shelly Bynum, Tamara Garrison, Vanessa Sweeney and Wen James Min.

Member & Public Comments ([link](#))

President Anjilvel opened the session for member and public comments. Tamara Garrison inquired about the Board's GR 12.2 analysis related to a recent statement on an independent legal profession. Executive Director Nevitt confirmed that a thorough analysis was conducted, ensuring alignment with WSBA's purposes as a mandatory bar. Wen James Min asked about the inclusion of public board members, which would be addressed later in the agenda. Brent Williams-Ruth expressed concerns about delays in the Bar Licensure Task Force's character and fitness report. Executive Director Nevitt provided an update on recent correspondence with the Supreme Court regarding the report.

President's Report ([link](#))

President Anjilvel encouraged to share bar activities and talking points with their communities to maintain transparency.

Executive Director's Report ([link](#))

Executive Director Terra Nevitt referred to her written report and invited questions. There were none.

Consent Calendar ([link](#))

Executive Director Nevitt introduced the consent calendar. Gov. Kevin Fay moved to for approval. Motion passed unanimously.

Update & Implementation Challenges Re Standards for Indigent Defense ([link](#))

Maialisa Vanyo, Chair of the Council on Public Defense (CPD) and Liz Mustin from Washington State Office of Public Defense provided an update on the challenges with respect to implementation of the WSBA Standards for Indigent Defense approved by the Board of Governors. Chair Vanyo provided background information about the role of the CPD, and the development of the standards, noting that the WSBA standards are under review by the Supreme Court to consider aligning the related court rules with the updated WSBA Standards. Chair Vanyo highlighted the importance of ensuring effective legal representation by addressing defender workload and qualifications. She expressed concerns about funding shortfalls and recruitment challenges, particularly in rural areas. The Office of Public Defense has requested additional funding to support counties in meeting these standards, but the state budget situation remains uncertain. The Board discussed the ethical implications of attorneys managing excessive caseloads and the necessity of engaging with legislators to advocate for adequate funding and support for public defense. Further updates are expected at the May Board meeting.

First Reading: Equity and Justice Plan ([link](#))

DEI Council Co-Chairs Raina Wagner, along with Equity and Justice Plan Committee Co-Chairs Sharon Sakamoto and Miryam Gordon, presented the Equity and Justice Plan for its first reading. The Plan is the culmination of two years of collaborative work aimed at enhancing legal services through diversity, equity, and inclusion. The presenters emphasized the plan's role as a living document designed to guide WSBA's

efforts in achieving equitable outcomes. Key discussions included the historical context of the plan, the importance of measurable outcomes, and the integration of the plan into WSBA's strategic framework. Feedback from the Board included the need for clear action items, regular demographic studies to track progress, and the inclusion of diverse voices in the implementation process. Brent Williams-Ruth underscored the significance of leadership in executing the plan's objectives. The session concluded with a call for further input before the second reading, highlighting the plan's potential to shape WSBA's future initiatives.

First Reading: Proposal to Add Public Members to the Board of Governors ([link](#))

Gov. Jordan Couch, Volunteer Engagement Advisor Paris Eriksen, and Assistant General Counsel Cate Schur presented a proposal to add two public members to the Board of Governors. Gov. Couch emphasized the importance of including public perspectives to better serve the public, aligning with WSBA's mission. The proposal suggests that public members, appointed by the Washington Supreme Court, would serve three-year terms with voting rights and could serve as treasurer, though not in presidential roles. The discussion highlighted both support and concerns. After thorough discussion, the Board agreed to consider further feedback and explore potential compromises before a second reading.

Proposal to Create a BOG Governance Committee ([link](#))

President Anjilvel and General Counsel Laurie Powers presented the proposed governance committee charter, aiming to establish a systematic triennial review of bylaws, policies, and board committees. The proposal allows for flexibility in review timelines and includes provisions for staff support. Nancy Hawkins and Gov. Emily Arneson raised concerns about the potential top-down approach with respect to the evaluation of sections. Past Governor Brent Williams-Ruth clarified that the intent is to streamline and align bylaws, not to overhaul the organization. Gov. Fay emphasized that the review focuses on board committees, not sections. Gov. Kevin Fay moved to approve the governance committee charter as presented. The motion passed unanimously, with Gov. Alain Villeneuve was not present for the vote.

Recess

President Anjilvel recessed the meeting for the day at 4:55 p.m.

Day Two ([link](#))

President Anjilvel called day two of the board meeting to order at 9:11 a.m.

FY26 Budget Retreat ([link](#))

Treasurer Kari Petrasek, Finance and Director Tiffany Lynch, and Chief Communications Officer Sara Niegowski led a discussion on developing a license fee philosophy. The aim is to establish a consistent approach to setting license fees, emphasizing the importance of smaller routine adjustments rather than more infrequent, but more significant increases. The Board reviewed the role of the unrestricted reserve fund in supporting fee changes and considered the impact of inflation and cost-of-living adjustments on budgeting. Members discussed the need for transparent communication with the membership regarding fee adjustments, highlighting member benefits and WSBA's regulatory obligations. There was consensus on the importance of aligning fee structures with operational needs and member expectations. The Board

agreed to gather member feedback on the proposed philosophy, aiming for transparency and engagement.

Discussion Re License Fee Hardship Exemption ([link](#))

Gov. Jordan Couch and Chief Regulatory Counsel Renata Garcia presented a proposal to expand the license fee hardship exemption. The proposal suggests increasing the exemption from two to three times in a career and adjusting the eligibility criteria from 200% to 270% of the federal poverty level (FPL), aligning with the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) metric. The proposed changes aim to support members experiencing financial hardship, acknowledging the economic challenges faced by those earning below \$42,000 annually (200% of the FPL for a household of two). The Board discussed the importance of equitable language, suggesting terms like "scholarship" or "grant" to reduce stigma. The proposal will undergo fiscal and equity analyses before returning for a first reading. The Board expressed general support, emphasizing the need for inclusivity and understanding of diverse financial situations among members.

Discussion of Requests to file and Amicus Brief in Perkins Coie Case ([link](#))

General Counsel Laurie Powers provided background on requests for WSBA to file an amicus brief in *Perkins Coie LLP v. U.S. Department of Justice*. The case involves significant issues affecting the legal profession in Washington State. The Board debated whether to file at the trial or appellate level, with consensus leaning toward the appellate level for greater impact. Gov. Kari Petrusek moved to authorize the Executive Committee to prepare an amicus brief for the appellate level. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The Board also decided to redact and release a confidential memo that was provided to the Board in preparation for the discussion to ensure transparency while maintaining confidentiality of privileged information.

Governor Roundtable ([link](#))

Chief Communication Officer Sara Niegowski gave an update on the Rule of Law Ambassador Program, emphasizing its role in promoting education and confidence in the legal profession. The program aims to launch on Law Day, May 1, with public events and a toolkit for ambassadors. Gov. Parvin Price proposed educational presentations on the U.S. Constitution for the Board and bar members, aligning with the ambassador program. Gov. Mary Rathbone raised concerns about the implementation of indigent defense standards, highlighting potential challenges in meeting attorney requirements in Grant County. The Board acknowledged the need for solutions and discussed forming an implementation committee.

Executive Session: Receive and Discuss Legal Advice ([link](#))

President Anjilvel moved the Board to executive session at 1:25 p.m. to receive and discuss legal advice. The session concluded at 2:30 p.m., and the Board resumed the public session.

Gov. Couch moved to approve a recommendation 1A for a statement titled "Lawful and Necessary," affirming WSBA's commitment to promoting the rule of law and diversify the profession. The motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.

Gov. Couch moved to approve a recommendation 1B of WSBA's guiding principle which includes core values that inform strategic goals and decision making. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.

Gov. Couch moved to approve WSBA Board of Governors sign on in support of ABA rule of Law statement. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.

During the public session, the Board of Governors discussed several recommendations from confidential materials. Nancy Hawkins expressed concern about a lack of transparency with respect to items taken up in Executive Session and Executive Director Nevitt responded.

Adjournment

There being no further business, President Anjilvel adjourned the meeting at 3:10 p.m. on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Terra Nevitt

Terra Nevitt
WSBA Executive Director & Secretary



Board of Governors Meeting – Motions List
Olympia, WA
March 21-22, 2025

1. Motion to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion to approve the governance committee charter as presented. Motion passed unanimously. Gov. Alain Villeneuve was not present for the vote.
3. Motion to authorize the Executive Committee to prepare an amicus brief for the appellate level in the Perkins Coie case. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Motion to approve Recommendation 1A for a statement titled “Lawful and Necessary,” affirming WSBA’s commitment to promoting the rule of law and diversifying the profession. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.
5. Motion to approve Recommendation 1B of WSBA’s guiding principle, which includes core values that inform strategic goals and decision making. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.
6. Motion to approve WSBA Board of Governors sign-on in support of the ABA Rule of Law statement. Motion passed unanimously. Govs. Fay and Widney were not present for the vote.