

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MINUTES

Wenatchee, WA

May 1-2, 2026

Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting of the Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) was called to order by Immediate Past President Sunitha Anjilvel at 9:02 a.m. on Friday, May 1, 2026. Governors in attendance were:

Matthew Dresden

Kevin Fay

Kristina Larry

Todd Bloom

Nam Nguyen

Allison Widney

Kari Petrasek

Parvin Price

Christopher Bhang

Mary Rathbone

Emily Arneson

Jordan Couch

Alain Villeneuve

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

Also in attendance were Alec Stephens, Alex Reaganson, Alexander Wisby, Betsylew Miale-Gix, Brian McMahon, Bobby Henry, Catherine Biestek, Catherine Schur, Dan Crystal, Darcel Labo, Andrew Yi, David Ward, George Fearing, Justin Bingham, Kyle Sciuchetti, Nancy Hawkins, Nicole Gustine, Norma Linda Ureña, Julianne Unite, Min Kang, Paris Eriksen, Patrick Malone, Peter Arkison, Rajeev Majumdar, Sophie Ying, and Timothy Allen.

Immediate Past President Anjilvel commended the legal community's role in fostering public understanding of and trust in the legal system noting President Adewale's concurrent participation in a Law Day event in Olympia. A short film was premiered showcasing the positive impact of the WSBA's Lawyers in the Classroom program. Board members were encouraged to serve as community ambassadors by participating in the pledge drive to have lawyers in classrooms on Constitution Day.

Member and Public Comments

Immediate Past President Anjilvel opened the floor for member and public comments. Alex Reaganson, Chair of the Washington New Members Committee, addressed the Board on behalf of the committee and individually. Mr. Reaganson expressed support for Governor Couch's proposal to remove ABA accreditation requirements for the bar exam, citing the potential to increase diversity in the legal profession and to generate additional licensing fee revenue. He emphasized the importance of eliminating barriers for graduates of non-accredited schools, particularly those from low-income backgrounds.

Consent Calendar

Immediate Past President Anjilvel presented the consent calendar. There being no requests for removal or objections, the items on the consent calendar were adopted by unanimous consent. Governor Villeneuve expressed appreciation for the APEX Award process and encouraged increased member participation in future nominations.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Nevitt referred to her written report available in the meeting materials and invited questions. No questions were raised.

Proposed Amendments to APR 3(d), APR 4(d), and WSBA Bylaws Re Score Expiration and Bar Exam Requirement – First Read

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia presented proposed amendments to Admission and Practice Rules 3(d) and 4(d), along with corresponding amendments to the WSBA Bylaws, addressing score expiration timelines and bar exam requirements. The proposal was presented for initial Board review. The Board discussed the proposal, and the matter will return to the Board for further consideration.

Proposed Amendments to APR 3(b)(3) Re Common Law Jurisdictions for Bar Exam – First Read

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia introduced the first reading of proposed amendments to APR 3(b)(3), which govern qualifications for lawyers from common law jurisdictions to sit for the Washington bar exam. The proposed amendments seek to modernize language that currently references "jurisdictions where the common law of England is the basis of jurisprudence" and to align the active legal experience requirements for internationally trained lawyers with those applicable to U.S.-trained lawyers, who require one year of experience compared to three years currently required of foreign-trained lawyers. Governors expressed support for the changes and suggested further language revisions to encompass lawyers from civil law jurisdictions. Chief Garcia agreed to follow up with Governors and to gather feedback from the admissions team on practical implementation. The matter will return to the Board at a future meeting.

Proposed Amendments to APR 1(e) Re Definition of Active Legal Experience – First Read

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia presented proposed amendments to clarify the definition of “active legal experience” for purposes of admission by motion and reactivation of inactive licenses. The current definition was identified as vague and inconsistently applied. The proposal establishes a minimum standard of 1,000 qualifying hours over a 12-month period and explicitly excludes unauthorized practice of law and other specified activities. Concerns were raised that the proposed list of qualifying activities was overly restrictive, potentially excluding positions involving substantive legal work under lawyer supervision that do not formally require a law license. Chief Garcia acknowledged the complexity of establishing clear and enforceable standards and indicated that the feedback would be taken into account. Further review and consultation with the admissions team were proposed before the matter returns to the Board.

Proposed Changes to Admissions Policies Re Definition of Approved Law School – First Read

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia presented proposed changes to the definition of “approved law school” for admission to practice in Washington. The proposal would allow graduates of law schools recognized by other jurisdictions for state bar eligibility—in addition to ABA-accredited schools—to sit for the Washington bar exam. Discussion included opinions on the quality of education at non-ABA-accredited institutions and potential impacts on competency standards, as well as the access benefits for first-generation students, working adults, and applicants facing financial or geographic barriers. Supporters noted that graduates of non-accredited schools are already being licensed in Washington through existing pathways. Gov. Rathbone moved to approve the proposed changes to admissions policies re definition of approved law school as presented, with an effective date of September 1, 2026. The motion passed 10 to 1 with one negative vote from Gov. Kevin Fay. Governors Alain Villeneuve, Emily Arneson and Thomas Ahearne were not present for the vote.

Proposed Changes to Admissions Policies Re LPO Exam and Repeat Late Filing Deadline for NextGen

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia presented two related action items. The first would amend the Limited Practice Officer (LPO) examination schedule by shifting exam dates from February and July to April and October, to better align with applicant schedules and reduce administrative costs. The second would add an additional application deadline for candidates who did not pass the immediately preceding Washington State bar examination, in response to anticipated delays in score delivery associated with the transition to the next-generation bar exam, to avoid penalizing applicants for circumstances outside their control. Gov. Petrasek moved to approve the proposed changes to admissions policies re LPO exam and repeat late filing deadline for NextGen as presented. The motion passed unanimously. Gov. Arneson and Gov. Villeneuve were not present for the vote.

Proposed Changes to Committee and Board Policy Re Board of Bar Examiners

Chief Regulatory Counsel Garcia presented a proposal to amend WSBA policy to increase the maximum size of the Board of Bar Examiners from 50 to 75 members. The expansion is intended to ensure adequate capacity for grading and drafting ethics prompts as the WSBA transitions to the next-generation bar exam and the new portfolio evaluation pathway. All Board members continue to be selected through a competitive application process and mandatory training, with scheduling coordinated around preset grading conference dates. Additional costs would be offset by application fees beginning in fiscal year 2027. Gov. Bloom inquired about the necessity of a maximum size limit, which was addressed by emphasizing the importance of structured training and managed recruitment. Gov. Couch moved to approve the proposed changes to committee and

board policy regarding Board of Bar Examiners. The motion passed unanimously. Gov. Arneson and Gov. Villeneuve were not present for the vote.

President-Elect Candidate Interview and Election

The Board conducted the election for the 2026–2027 WSBA President-Elect. Gov. Nguyen was the sole candidate for the position. Gov. Nguyen delivered an opening statement and responded to questions from the Board. Ballots were administered and counted by Executive Director Nevitt, General Counsel Powers, and Chief Disciplinary Counsel Ende via secret electronic ballot. Gov. Nguyen was elected as WSBA President-Elect for 2026–2027.

Governor Candidate Interviews and Elections

The Board conducted candidate interviews and elections for three open Board of Governors seats: District 8, District 7 North, and District 2 (mid-term vacancy). Each candidate was allotted 15 minutes for an opening statement and questions from the Board. Ballots were administered and counted by Executive Director Nevitt, General Counsel Powers, and Chief Disciplinary Counsel Ende, with voting conducted by secret electronic ballot. Candidates not being interviewed were excluded from the proceedings during each respective interview.

District 8

The candidates for the District 8 seat were Timothy Allen, Brian McMahon, Sophie Ying and Makan Shetabi. Aaron Richter had withdrawn from the race prior to the meeting; Makan Shetabi was not present for the interview. Sophie Ying was elected to represent District 8.

District 7 North

The candidates for the District 7 North seat were Alexander Wisby and Norma Linda Ureña. Norma Linda Ureña was elected to represent District 7 North.

District 2 Mid-Term Vacancy

The candidates for the District 2 mid-term vacancy were Kenneth Zirkman, Min Kang, and Peter Arkison. Kenneth Zirkman had withdrawn from the race prior to the meeting. Min Kang was elected to represent District 2 in the mid-term vacancy.

The Board expressed appreciation to all candidates who participated in the interview and election process.

Interim Report from the Oath Review and Drafting Task Force

Task Force Chair Majumdar and Chief Disciplinary Counsel Ende presented an interim report from the Oath Review and Drafting Task Force. The Task Force has been gathering historical documents and academic resources on the development of U.S. oaths of attorney. The task force includes a diverse group of judges, private practitioners, and non-lawyer practitioners, meets monthly, and has achieved high survey response rates from licensed legal professionals and specialty bar associations.

Gov. Villeneuve suggested that the revised oath reflect Washington State's unique legal and constitutional history and its relationship with tribal nations.

Special Meeting of the Washington State Bar Foundation: Approve Appointment of New Trustee

The Board convened a Special Meeting of the Washington State Bar Foundation. Foundation Board President Anderson presented a proposal to appoint Audrey Tran, a second-year law student, as the new law student trustee on the Washington State Bar Foundation Board of Trustees. The foundation has historically maintained a designated law student trustee position; Ms. Tran's term would run through her graduation. Gov. Petrasek moved to approve the appointment of Audrey Tran to the Washington State Bar Foundation Board of Trustees. The motion was passed unanimously. Mr. Anderson also noted that a public member trustee vacancy exists on the foundation board and that efforts to identify a qualified candidate are underway.

RECESS

There being no further business for the day, the meeting recessed at 4:00 p.m. on May 1, 2026.

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 2026

Call to Order

The Board of Governors reconvened on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at 9:03 a.m. at the Wenatchee Convention Center, with President Adewale presiding.

President's Report

President Adewale opened with a call to action for legal practitioners across Washington to participate in Constitution Day programs on September 17, 2026, encouraging Board members to lead by example as community ambassadors by being present in classrooms in their respective districts. President Adewale also noted the upcoming joint column with Executive Director Nevitt in Bar News and provided updates on ongoing Law Day activities.

Final Report from the Member Well-Being Task Force

Task Force Chair Bingham, joined by Task Force Members Labo and Sciuchetti, Member Wellness Program Manager Crystal, and Advancement Department Director Plachy, presented the Member Well-Being Task Force's final report following two years of work. The report addressed systemic well-being challenges across the legal profession and put forward actionable strategies to improve lawyer well-being.

Gov. Arneson moved to accept the Final Report from the Member Well-Being Task Force and to task relevant staff with implementing next steps, including bringing policy questions and updates back to the Board. The motion passed unanimously. Gov. Fay and Gov. Villeneuve were not present for the vote.

Proposed Client Protection Fund Assessment for 2027 and 2028

Treas. Nguyen and Director of Finance Lynch presented the proposed Client Protection Fund Assessment for 2027 and 2028. The Client Protection Fund protects clients from financial loss resulting from dishonest conduct by lawyers and is supported by WSBA's active attorney, Limited License Legal Technician, House Counsel, Foreign Law Consultant, and pro hac vice members. The fund currently holds approximately \$5 million. The Client Protection Board recommended a \$5 assessment for both 2027 and 2028. The Budget and Audit Committee reviewed this recommendation and proposed a modification: no assessment for 2027 and

a \$5 assessment for 2028, based on the current fund balance and the absence of any immediate threat to the fund's solvency. Gov. Petrasek moved to approve the Budget and Audit Committee's recommendation of a \$0 assessment for 2027 and a \$5 assessment for 2028. The motion passed unanimously. Gov. Fay and Gov. Villeneuve were not present for the vote. The recommendation will be forwarded to the Supreme Court for final determination.

Proposed Changes to General Rule 9 (GR 9)

Court Rules and Procedures Committee Chair Yi and Administrative Office of the Courts staff attorney Ward presented proposed changes to GR 9, which governs Supreme Court rulemaking. The principal proposed change would move the deadline for submitting rule changes from October 15 to September 1, providing additional time for stakeholders, including the WSBA, to offer pre-publication comments to the Supreme Court.

Chair Yi proposed that the Board delegate limited authority to the Court Rules and Procedures Committee to conduct initial technical pre-screening of proposed rules prior to their publication for public comment. This screening would be confined to identifying typographical and grammatical errors and would not encompass substantive review or comment on behalf of the WSBA. Discussion ensued regarding the need for a formal charter to define the committee's authority and accountability when acting in this capacity. Gov. Arneson and Chair Yi agreed to work with staff liaison Gustine to develop appropriate guidelines, to be presented at the July meeting. Comments on the proposed GR 9 changes are due by June 1, 2026.

Governor At-Large Election

DEI Council Co-Chairs Gov. Larry and Alec Stephens presented the Council's report on the at-large governor election. The Council evaluated five candidates—following one withdrawal—using a structured rubric and recommended two finalists for placement on the member ballot. Executive Director Nevitt addressed the election timeline under the WSBA Bylaws and the appropriate process for managing any changes in candidate status prior to the election. Gov. Bhang moved to accept the DEI Council's recommendation to advance Tom Ahearne and Sophie Ying to the ballot for the at-large governor position. The motion passed unanimously, with one abstention.

Executive Session

The Board entered executive session at 11:07 a.m. to receive and discuss legal advice regarding litigation involving mandatory bar associations and the Keller deduction, as a follow-up to prior executive session discussions in November 2025 and March 2026, and to discuss the WSBA's future strategy with respect to the Keller deduction in 2027 and beyond. The session concluded at 11:56 a.m. and the Board returned to public session.

Governor Roundtable

Gov. Price requested an update on Department of Justice rulemaking. Chief Disciplinary Counsel Ende reported that the WSBA's public comment on the DOJ's rulemaking proposal had been timely submitted and

publicly posted, following a delay in posting evidently attributable to an exceptionally high volume of submissions received by the Department.

Gov. Dresden, co-chair of the Member Engagement Council, updated the Board on the section viability review process currently underway for three sections: the Legal Assistance and Military Personnel Section, the Liquor, Cannabis, and Psychedelic Section, and the Animal Law Section. Gov. Dresden noted that presentation of recommendations to the full Board has been delayed to September.

Gov. Bhang highlighted the upcoming National Mock Trial Competition in Des Moines, Iowa, and expressed support for Seattle's University Prep High School team competing at the national level.

Meeting Feedback: Rose, Thorns & Bud

Governors participated in a meeting feedback session using the Rose, Thorns & Bud format. Positive feedback was extended to the meeting hosts in Wenatchee and to President Adewale for his leadership in chairing the meeting. Areas for continued attention and future planning were noted, including coordination of the July retreat, which will be led by President-Elect Petrsek.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Adewale adjourned the meeting at 12:02 p.m. on May 2, 2026.

Respectfully,

Terra Nevitt

Terra Nevitt
WSBA Executive Director & Secretary



**Board of Governors Meeting – Motions List
Olympia, WA
May 1-2, 2026**

- **Approve the Consent Calendar:** Adopted by unanimous consent.
- **Approve Proposed Changes to Admissions Policies Re Definition of Approved Law School (Effective September 1, 2026):** Passed with one negative vote; three members not present.
- **Approve Proposed Changes to Admissions Policies Re LPO Exam and Repeat Late Filing Deadline for NextGen:** Passed unanimously; three members not present.
- **Approve Proposed Changes to Committee and Board Policy Re Board of Bar Examiners:** Passed unanimously; three members not present.
- **Elect Nam Nguyen as WSBA President-Elect for 2026–2027:** Elected unanimously by secret ballot.
- **Elect Sophie Ying as District 8 Governor:** Elected by secret ballot following a runoff election.
- **Elect Norma Linda Ureña as District 7 North Governor:** Elected by secret ballot.
- **Elect Min Kang as District 2 Governor (Mid-Term Vacancy):** Elected by secret ballot.
- **Approve Appointment of Audrey Tran to the Washington State Bar Foundation Board of Trustees:** Passed unanimously.
- **Accept the Final Report from the Member Well-Being Task Force and Task Staff with Implementation of Recommendations:** Passed unanimously; three members not present.
- **Approve Client Protection Fund Assessment (\$0 for 2027 and \$5 for 2028):** Passed unanimously; three members not present.
- **Approve DEI Council Recommendation to Advance Tom Ahearne and Sophie Ying to the At-Large Governor Ballot:** Passed unanimously, with one abstention.