

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Board of Governors March 2024 Meeting Update

A summary prepared by the WSBA of the Board of Governors (Board) meeting held March 7-8, 2024, at the Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane. The agenda, materials, and video recording from this Board meeting are [online](#). The next regular meeting is May 2-3, 2024, in Richland. The Board is the WSBA's governing body charged with determining general policies of the WSBA and approving its annual budget. To subscribe to the Board Meeting Notification list, email barleaders@wsba.org.

NEED TO KNOW

New WSBA Standards for Indigent Defense Services

After several hours of passionate testimony from stakeholders across the state, the Board adopted new standards for indigent defense services that address concerns in three distinct areas: Support staff, attorney qualifications, and caseloads. The Washington Supreme Court asked the WSBA's Council on Public Defense (CPD) to review the current standards based on a watershed national public-defense study released last fall. The CPD had already been studying concerns about caseload since early 2022, and the national study underscored the daily experiences of Washington defenders—in recent years, there has been a steep increase in the number and complexity of cases, especially compared to 50 years ago when the standards were first written. Before voting, the Board heard from public defenders advocating for much-needed relief to be able to adequately safeguard Washington citizens' Constitutional right to counsel; as well as from others, such as prosecutors and county representatives, concerned the new standards would cause significant financial hardship and unintended consequences in the criminal justice system. (See page 243 in the meeting materials.) The newly adopted WSBA defense standards, as prescribed by RCW 10.101.030, will serve as guidelines to counties and cities as they adopt their own local standards for delivery of public defense services. Separately, the Washington Supreme Court maintains its own Standards for Indigent Defense, which are codified in Court rules that govern lawyer ethical and professional obligations. With adoption of new defense standards based on the CPD's recommendations, the WSBA is now asking the Court to do the same. More information about the new standards and what comes next.

OTHER BUSINESS

Local Heroes

The WSBA recognized Allan Bonney and Lisa Dickinson as Local Heroes, an honor bestowed by the WSBA President in partnership with county bar associations to recognize colleagues who make noteworthy contributions to their communities. Both were nominated by the Spokane County Bar Association. Allan was heralded for his work with the Spokane Bar's Volunteer Lawyers Program, especially his efforts to help community members facing hardships after the state's post-pandemic eviction moratorium was lifted. Lisa was honored for her mentoring work in the local legal community and tireless advocacy for Spokane on the statewide and national levels.

Legal Technology Task Force

The Board chartered a new task force and approved appointment of chair Jenny Durkan to help fulfill one of the WSBA's strategic priorities addressing technology-related opportunities and threats for legal practitioners. Over the next 15 months, the task force will undertake a comprehensive assessment and investigation of the legal technology landscape in Washington and across the U.S. The final goal is a report to the Board with recommendations to support and strengthen the use of technology in WSBA members' practice—emphasizing effective, efficient, and ethical use of technology that enhances equitable access to justice. (See page 146.)

Go Zags!

The Board held its meeting at Gonzaga University School of Law and took the opportunity to get to know the next generation of Bulldog lawyers and the Spokane community. Events included a community service project at the Habitat for Humanity Spokane storefront, a reception with Spokane County Bar Association leaders, a welcome by Dean Jacob Rooksby, a panel discussion with current law students, attendance at the annual Quackenbush Lecture featuring U.C. Berkeley School of Law Dean Erwin Chemerinsky speaking about "Reforming the Supreme Court," and a meeting with the student bar association.

In Other News

Supreme Court Adopts Many Recommendations from the Bar Licensure Task Force. WSBA leaders who served on the Washington Bar Licensure Task Force announced breaking news: The Court just adopted many of the recommendations from the task force, including implementation of the NextGen Bar Exam and creation of an experiential pathway as an alternative to the bar exam for law-school students, law-school graduates, and APR 6 Law Clerk candidates. The justices expect to take up the task force's recommendations regarding the character and fitness process at a future en banc. [Read more.](#)

The Board also:

- Held a panel with county-bar leaders from across the state to hear what's happening in different legal communities and understand how the WSBA can support them.
- Held a budget retreat to talk about the process and priorities shaping the 2025 WSBA budget. The Board previously set a no-increase license fee for 2025, holding the fee steady for the sixth year in a row. (See page 118.)
- Approved the Court Rules and Procedures Committee's comment to the Washington Supreme Court in opposition to proposed amendments to CR 28, regarding court reporters, and CR 30, regarding videographers. (See page 136.)