

Examining the Historical Organization and Structure of the WSBA (ETHOS of the WSBA)

Approved by the Board of Governors January 13, 2022

The Washington State Supreme Court has requested that the Washington State Bar Association convene a process to examine the structure of the WSBA. By motion, the Board of Governors has agreed to that request and will schedule eight meetings between January 2022 and August 2022, in which to educate itself on important issues impacting integrated and voluntary bar associations, collect public comment and provide an appropriate recommendation or recommendations to the high court.

CHARTER

The Board of Governors will review and assess the current structure of the WSBA in light of recent case law implicating rights under the First Amendment (Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Association). The process will collect information regarding the experiences of other states that have either recently changed their organizational structure, or are considering whether to do so. The process will also consider the cost of any structural change to its membership and what effect structural change, if any, will have on 1) diversity, equity and inclusion and any impact on marginalized communities, 2) the regulatory division of the bar; 2) WSBA Sections and 3) Washington State Supreme Court Boards, 4) the Access to Justice community, 5) the public, and 6) the membership of the WSBA.

The Board of Governors will invite presentations from those with subject matter expertise or have relevant experience with mandatory or voluntary bar associations in other parts of the country.

The Board of Governors will solicit input and active participation from stakeholders including but not limited to WSBA leadership and staff, WSBA sections, committees, councils, the Access to Justice Community, Supreme Court Boards, minority bar associations and interested members of the public.

The Board of Governors will receive and share knowledge and have open, collaborative, and respectful conversations. The eight meetings will generally be open to the public, except in the rare circumstance in which the Board of Governors must meet in executive session in order to consider legal advice from its attorney.

The Board Governors will make a recommendation or recommendations to the Washington State Supreme Court as to the current or future structure of the Washington State Bar Association.