

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

WSBA Board of Governors No Retaliation Policy

(Adopted by the Board of Governors January 18, 2019)

Purpose

The Washington State Bar Association (“WSBA”) is firmly committed to maintaining a safe environment that encourages its employees and members of the Board of Governors (“BOG”) and other volunteers to speak up about sexual discrimination or other harassment without fear of retaliation. To that end, and to prevent victimization and other retaliatory behavior towards those who report such conduct to appropriate individuals, the WSBA adopts a No Retaliation Policy. This Policy is important for many reasons, including:

1. When reports of concerns of discriminatory or harassing conduct, or retaliatory action are made, the WSBA must consider them and take appropriate action. Retaliating against a BOG member or other WSBA volunteer, or WSBA employee who brought attention to inappropriate behavior harms the WSBA’s trustworthiness and reliability. Retaliation harms the public interest by deterring others from reporting complaints.
2. Any kind of retaliatory action, whether intentional or unintentional, may expose the WSBA to a serious legal risk.

Scope

This Policy applies to all WSBA employees and prospective, current, or former BOG members and other WSBA volunteers (BOG members and other WSBA volunteers hereinafter collectively referred to as “volunteers”). WSBA Employees are subject to provisions under the employee handbook policy on “Standards of Conduct and Discipline” and “Sexual and Other Harassment Policy” as determined by the Executive Director.

Policy

The WSBA prohibits any form of retaliation against or intimidation of WSBA employees or volunteers who report good-faith concerns of discriminatory, harassing, illegal or dishonest conduct or who participate in investigations or other proceedings related to such a report, even if the WSBA ultimately concludes that the report cannot be substantiated or that no violation of law, regulation or WSBA policy has occurred.

Retaliation Definition

Retaliation includes any kind of negative action against a current or former volunteer or employee who has reported actual or potential violations of equal opportunity laws or regulations (protected activity). These adverse actions create a hostile, threatening or uncomfortable environment for a person who reported alleged inappropriate conduct or participated in an investigation. Examples of retaliatory actions can occur outside of an employment relationship and may include, but are not limited to:

- Disparaging the person to others or in the media.
- Taking actions not directly related to employment or volunteer role/status or by causing the individual harm.
- Termination or illegal retraction of compensation and benefits.
- Exclusion from events or meetings.
- Any other action that might deter reasonable individuals from engaging in protected activity.

Activity protected by this Policy includes but is not limited to:

- Complaints about workplace harassment or discrimination;
- Notice of intent to file a lawsuit or charge, even if the filing is not ultimately made;
- Participation in a pending investigation of misconduct or violations; and
- Resisting sexual advances or intervening to protect others.

The WSBA will not interfere with the rights of employees or volunteers to speak out about or disclose conduct violating this policy. When possible, the WSBA encourages open communication in accordance with our “Guiding Communication Principles” and “Conflict Resolution Practices Policy.”

Reporting Complaints

Volunteers may file complaints with the President of the WSBA, the Chair of the BOG Personnel Committee or the Executive Director. WSBA employees may file complaints internally to their immediate supervisor, the Director of Human Resources or the Executive Director. Reports from volunteers or employees of misconduct or suspected violations will be investigated thoroughly and those who report or participate in the investigation must be protected from retaliation.

Appropriate action will be taken against a volunteer who is found to have engaged in prohibited harassing or retaliatory conduct, up to and including removal from the volunteer position as determined in accordance with the WSBA Bylaws and/or Washington Supreme Court rules.

Filing False Reports

False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation (as opposed to complaints that, even if erroneous, are made in good faith) may be the subject of appropriate action.

All WSBA employees and volunteers are required to cooperate with investigations undertaken in response to a complaint under this policy. In particular, among other things, WSBA employees and volunteers are required to make themselves available to investigators immediately upon request, be forthcoming and truthful with investigators, and provide complete and accurate information. Failing to cooperate with an investigation may also be grounds for removal from a volunteer position. WSBA Employees are subject to the policies and procedures in the employee handbook.