

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

**Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting I Virtual Only**

**Thursday, November 18, 2021, | 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 856 0140 1009 | Passcode: 004006 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

### AGENDA

1. Introductions, November Meeting Recap and Approval of November Minutes
2. WSBA Updates
3. Discussion of proposed STAR Committee Fellowship Program
4. Confirmation of subcommittee membership and interest
  - a. Community Education and Outreach
  - b. Pipeline Placement Program
  - c. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse
5. Other business
  - a. Pro Bono opportunities
  - b. Public defender
  - c. May BOG Meeting scheduling conflict
6. Next Steps/ Conclusion
7. Adjournment

### 2021 - 2022 STAR Committee Meeting Schedule

October 26, 2021	Meeting: 3 – 5:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
November 18, 2021	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
January 20, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
February 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
March 17, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
April 21, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
May 19, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
June 16, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
July 21, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
August 18, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only
September 15, 2022	Meeting: 12 - 2:00 p.m.	Virtual Only

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: April 17, 2021  
and modified to make  
Chair a voting member  
on July 16, 2021

### ***Purpose***

The WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee is committed to strengthen and support the practice of law in the rural communities throughout Washington state. Members of the STAR Committee will work to ensure that the practice of law in rural communities is present, growing, and thriving.

Practitioners in rural communities are few and far between. Additionally, many of these practitioners are nearing retirement without a clear plan of succession for their clients, leaving a void of access to legal representation and counsel. The STAR Committee will guide policy & program development, serves as ambassadors between the WSBA and these communities, explore and advocate for creative and innovative solutions, and regularly assess the legal landscape in rural communities to determine if WSBA policy, advocacy and program development require further resource for sustainability and improvements.

The STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in General Rule 12. More specifically, GR 12.1 (a) articulates the Washington Supreme Court’s regulatory objective to provide, in part, “meaningful access to justice. . .” while GR 12.1(d) strives for “affordable and accessible legal services.” In addition, the STAR Committee aligns with the authorized activities outlined in GR 12.2, in particular by providing “services to members and the public,” and “fostering collegiality among its members and goodwill between the legal profession and the public.”

Further, the STAR Committee furthers the WSBA mission to serve the public and the members of the Bar by providing focused attention on the unique needs of residents and members in rural areas both by improving access to legal practitioners in rural communities and outreach and development of a pipeline of younger rural residents to pursue a legal career and serve their communities.

### ***Definition of “Rural”***

For the purpose of the STAR Committee and reflective of Washington’s unique geographic and socio-geographic landscape, the definition of “rural” is as follows:

Based on the definitions produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (ERS) and an overview of Washington county population, we focused on counties with populations of less than 50,000 and more than 2,500. These areas are considered ‘urban non-metro areas not part of larger labor markets’ by ERS. As part of the working definition, and for ease, we have termed these counties as ‘rural.’ Based upon WA county population data, we’ve pursued a hypothesis that counties with 30,000 or more as rural, but likely more

adjacent to a labor market and perhaps have a varying set of circumstances that may differ from counties that are less than 30,000.

### **Composition**

Members of the STAR Committee should have demonstrated experience and/or interest in a thriving legal practice in Washington's rural communities. The STAR Committee will consist of 13 members and are outlined as:

- Chair (voting member)
- 2 Current or Former WSBA Board of Governors Members (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Member At Large (voting member)
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities - see above for definition of "rural" (voting members)
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member, as defined in WSBA Bylaws (voting member)
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting members, must be currently employed with a WA Law School which is not currently represented on the Committee.)
- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP)(voting member).

WSBA Staff Liaison: Member Services and Engagement Manager or staff member in the Advancement Department, non-voting

Board of Governor Liaison: as assigned annually, non-voting.

### **Terms**

- Chair: two-year term
- Members: three-year term

### **Initial Committee Terms**

The first appointments to the STAR Committee should effectuate a staggered rotation of STAR Committee members. Therefore, the following terms are in place for the first appointment cycle only. All subsequent terms should adhere to the term limits stated above. STAR Committee member serving an initial term less than three years, should be considered an incomplete term. Therefore, the member is eligible to serve two subsequent complete three-year terms in WSBA Bylaws.

- 2 Active WSBA Members  
*1 member with two-year term, 1 member with three-year term.*
- 4 Active WSBA Members from rural communities (see above for definition)  
*1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two years term, 2 members with three-years term.*
- 3 Law School Representatives (voting, must be currently employed with a WA Law School)
- *1 member with one-year term, 1 member with two-years term, 1 member with three-years term.*

The following positions will begin as a standard term as set forth in this charter.

- Chair
- 1 Active WSBA Young Lawyer Member

- 1 Active WSBA Lawyer Member currently employed with a Qualified Legal Service Provider (QLSP).

### ***Scope of Work***

The scope of the STAR Committee’s work will focus on what the WSBA is uniquely positioned to do in supporting a sustaining and thriving environment for the practice of law in Washington’s rural communities. The STAR Committee will work with all relevant and interested stakeholders to collaborate where needed. The provision of direct legal services and civil legal aid to the public is outside the scope of the STAR Committee.

### ***Measures of Success***

- Increased awareness of the issues and possible solutions to address any gap in practicing members in rural communities.
- A sustainable pipeline of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- Increased numbers of legal practitioners in rural communities.
- The establishment of funding for programs and initiatives for the practice of law in rural communities.

### ***STAR Committee Roles***

#### **1. Community Education and Outreach**

Coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs, opportunities and benefits of a rural practice. This can include, but should not be limited to, comprehensive information on WSBA’s website, features in WSBA publications, presentations at high schools, law schools and community colleges. Meetings and events, such as a summit or symposium, to highlight the issue, convene interested stakeholders to share their concerns and strategize on possible solutions.

#### **2. Pipeline and Placement Program(s)**

Develop WSBA programming, or WSBA supported/partnered programming designed to build a pipeline of practitioners in rural areas as well as an incentive program to encourage members to explore a rural practice on a time-limited or multi-year timeframe. This role should explore a possible collaboration or strategic overlap with WSBA existing and future mentorship program(s). In particular, this role will require extensive strategic planning and identification of external stakeholder support and additional funding sources. Coordinate with law schools and other stakeholders regarding economic incentives to practice in rural areas.

#### **3. Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse**

Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities in rural communities. This role should include making it easier, and perhaps more cost-effective, to add job postings to WSBA’s service. Develop a clearing house to assist retiring members with succession planning and the buying/selling of a practice.

### ***Committee Evaluation***

The STAR Committee should conduct an assessment within five years from the date of Board of Governors' approval by 1) conducting a survey of rural practitioners to provide stakeholder feedback regarding the impact of this Committee to effectuate change in these areas, 2) assessing the scope of work to reflect impact and progress in this area and align with trends in the greater legal community, and 3) earnestly examining if the Committee is necessary to continue the scope of work.

# WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

## Small Town and Rural Committee

### Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting Minutes Thursday, November 18, 2021, | 12:03 p.m. – 1:59 p.m. *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

**Committee Members Present:** Allison Foreman, Elizabeth Penoyar, Hunter Abell, Kathryn Burke, Laurie Powers, Merf Ehman, PJ Grabicki, Rusty McGuire, Zachary Bryant.

**Committee Members Absent:** Sarah Cuellar (excused), Sunitha Anjilvel (unexcused)

**WSBA Staff:** Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Kevin Plachy – Advancement Department Manager, Mike Kroner - WSBA Outreach Specialist

**Public Attendees:** Hon. Jane Smith, Cindy Yeung, Kari Petrasek, Ann Spangler, Sophia Byrd McSherry

#### [Introductions, October Meeting Recap and Approval of October Minutes](#)

Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee Chair, Governor Hunter Abell called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

On motion by STAR Committee Member PJ Grabicki, seconded by STAR Committee Member Laurie Powers, by unanimous vote (9-0-0) the STAR Committee approved the October 2021 meeting minutes.

Governor Abell provided a brief recap of the October meeting. Governor Abell invited those in attendance for the first time to introduce themselves and their interests in attending. The Hon. Jane Smith commented that she is a Justice with Colville Tribal Court of Appeals and has been with the Tribe for approximately 41 years. She also works with several surrounding tribes and was extremely happy to assist with this Committee, as rural areas have been very underserved. Governor Abell thanked Justice Smith for her willingness to support this Committee. Cindy Yeung, from Seattle University School of Law, introduced herself with she/her pronouns, explained that she is joining this Committee because getting attorneys in rural areas is important to her work with the moderate means program at Seattle University. She is currently working on a pipeline project that will put law students into Yakima/Toppenish areas and feels that it will pair well with this Committee's goals. Ann Spangler, from the University of Washington School of Law, commented that she grew up in Eastern Washington and lived in Ellensburg for 20 years. She helps students in the Gates program to move east and take jobs in that area. Ann feels it is important to get more students into Eastern Washington and show students the opportunities available to them in rural areas. PJ explained that approximately two years ago, during the listening tour in Eastern Washington, it became clear that this was a serious issue for Eastern Washington, and all of Washington. PJ explained that he began speaking about the issue at BOG

meetings, and this Committee grew from that. Kari Petrasek commented that she has an office in Mukilteo and home in Grant County near Soap Lake and spends a lot of time there. As the past chair of the Solo and Small Practice Section, and previous president of Washington Young Lawyers Division, she considers herself very social but feels that she has very little connection to lawyers in Grant, County. Kari commented that she feels she is in a good position to help get attorneys in to Grant County. Mike Kroner, WSBA Outreach Specialist, explained that he is in attendance because he will be focusing on county bar associations amongst others, and looks forward to working with Committee members.

### Discuss meeting schedule poll results

A Doodle poll was sent to STAR Committee members to gather preferences on meeting times. The most popular selection was Thursdays from noon to 2:00 pm. Governor Abell explained to STAR Committee members that this would be the meeting dates and times moving forward.

### Results of Committee members' interest in items specified in Charter

#### Discussion of Charter items

Governor Abell asked WSBA Staff Liaison Julianne Unite to give a recap of each charter item. Julianne described the three items listed in the charter, which may be found in the meeting materials on page four. Sophia Byrd McSherry asked in the meeting chat if non-Committee members were able to participate in charter initiatives. Governor Abell responded that all in attendance of this meeting were able to participate, it was not limited to just Committee members. PJ commented that he wondered if we should formulate subgroups that work geographical areas. Governor Abell commented that practicing in rural areas is different based on geographic location and invited others to share their opinion. STAR Committee member Betsy Penoyar asked if there was anyone from rural Western Washington other than herself, no response. Governor Abell feels that dividing by geographic location is a good idea and that the committee should come back to this discussion in the future.

#### Community Education and Outreach

STAR Committee Member Merf Ehman commented about diversity concerns in living in rural areas. Governor Abell feels that this could be addressed by community education. STAR Committee Member Rusty McGuire commented that he feels there is not a shortage of minorities in his area, and he also feels that the cultural barrier is the biggest because living in a rural area seems scary to applicants. Governor Abell commented that there are massive advantages to practicing in rural areas and marketing that to those working in the profession currently will be a huge benefit. Governor Abell also suggested seeking a significant presence in *Bar News*, addressing legal deserts, and doing something on a regular basis, either annual or biannual. WSBA Advancement Department Director Kevin Plachy commented that it would be feasible but would need to work on the timing and coordinating with the WSBA Communications Team's schedule. Mike suggested to reach out to those practicing in busy urban areas and having had moved into rural areas, to write an article surrounding such for *Bar News*. Rusty commented on an attorney who relocated to a rural area after working in Los Angeles. Mike commented that he would be happy to reach out to this attorney to see if he would like to write an article. Julianne commented that the timeline for *Bar News* is usually about two months, but the blog is less, being closer to two weeks and that could be used as an avenue to connect sooner. Governor Abell feels that reaching out to rural practitioners is a great way to show that the WSBA does not center around the I-5 corridor and downtown Seattle practices. Kevin commented via chat that he feels it would be best strategically, to dedicate an entire month in the *Bar News* to feature articles and content. Governor Abell commented on the idea about a marketing video that was initially brought up at the October meeting by STAR Committee Member Allison Foreman. Allison commented that having a well edited marketing video would likely reach more younger audiences, as law students are not reading

printed materials, they are on their phones and that media would be more effective. Governor Abell agreed and commented that it would be beneficial to tie this into the cohort idea discussed earlier. Julianne commented that it is important to find the right avenue to communicate to different audiences; *Bar News* does not go to law students so advertising there would not reach them. STAR Committee Member Zac Bryant commented that he feels it would be a good idea to partner with the Washington Young Lawyers Committee (WYLC) as those members would still have connections in law school and they may be struggling to find the right fit or opportunity and are not aware of rural options.

### Pipeline Placement Program

Governor Abell commented on making efforts to go to law schools, undergraduate schools, and high schools. Governor Abell mentioned that Gov. Sunitha Anjilvel had previously commented on a cohort idea in the last meeting. Governor Abell asked Committee members “what would a pipeline program look like?” He then asked for Committee responses. Betsy commented that, with University of Washington being the flagship public university, their tuition is far more affordable than the private schools, and that they need to be involved in the pipeline. If they are not letting in rural area students who will return to rural areas, we will not make progress. Cindy commented that geographic diversity is not a current requirement for admissions, but part of her reasoning for being on this Committee is to take info back to the admissions department. Laurie asked about how many applicants are schools getting from rural areas? Laurie does not think that it is necessarily an admissions issue, but a lack of applicants in general. She also commented that it is important to know what the opportunities are and what we are offering to students, before presenting them options at the law school level, and asked what are we presenting? Governor Abell commented that this Committee should be responsible for producing something tangible that we can take to those audiences. Ann commented that she sees students coming from rural communities is a need, but also see that law practice may be a steppingstone to get away from rural communities and can be a hard sell to keep them in those areas. Sophia commented that she had similar reactions as to what Ann described – she grew up in a rural community and all she wanted to do was get out. She did not find it as attractive after going to law school and living in a less rural area. Governor Abell acknowledged this as a valid and important point. Merf commented that just having jobs is not enough and that there needs to be a focus on incentives with fellowships, loan forgiveness, and more. STAR Committee Member Kathryn Burke (Katie) commented that when talking about barriers, financial aspect plays into this largely. Some may not want to come back to a rural area because it is not lucrative enough. She feels that part of the goal should be outreach, marketing factor, making it more attractive to law school grads and/or those contemplating change in career. Governor Abell commented that the STAR Committee will want to dedicate some time to discussing the financial piece. Justice Smith shared that growing up, she was not exposed to anyone in the legal profession. She suggested encouraging students as young as high school to intern, volunteer or find summer positions in the law community to expose them to what opportunities may open later in life. She also commented that younger adults/students are often only exposed to the legal field unless they are in trouble. Merf commented that there is a good point about equality issues. We have people interested in working in rural areas and they are concerned about LGBTQ, for people who have disabilities about accessibility of courts and business, and for others who might be the only person of a certain race, ethnicity, or religion. Merf feels that education about assumptions made about people in rural areas and understanding what is a myth and what is a truth and how to connect would be beneficial. PJ commented that it would be interesting to receive data from law schools on the number of students from rural areas that apply to Washington law schools. PJ asked if law schools would be able to provide this data? Cindy commented that often by the time students are applying for law school, they are no longer residing in rural areas. Laurie commented that they can ask the admissions team for this data, and she would be happy to report back to the Committee. Cindy also commented that they could

pull similar data from her school. Governor Abell commented that this could be something that would be further explored when Betsy and the law school representatives met to discuss admission diversity. Governor Abell opened the discussion up to financial considerations in rural practice areas and potential proposals. Governor Abell also commented that during the Rural Practice Project (RPP) and the October meeting for the STAR Committee there was discussion about service in a rural area being a part of loan repayment assistance program (LRAP) funding. Governor Abell asked law school reps to comment on LRAP details and its relationship with rural practice areas. Laurie commented that she really liked the idea of a cohort, especially if done as a state and all three law schools together. She suggested they could work very closely with five to 10 students to work in rural practice and then they could build from that, possibly mimicking the model that medical schools use. She feels that a cohort is more defined and more manageable. Governor Abell responded that the need for concreteness is crucial, and that he is hoping to take our conversations and turn them into concrete actions and proposal. Ann commented that UW has an LRAP program, and it can be used in rural practice. Zac commented via chat that rural medicine also attracts Conrad 30 applicants (immigration waiver). Laurie commented that Gonzaga has talked about an incubator program but has not put one into effect because their need did not fit the incubator model. Kevin commented via chat that we would want to investigate an incubator program that Montana has implemented - <https://www.mtlsa.org/rural-incubator-project-for-lawyers/>. Cindy commented that she runs an incubator program and feels they are different than a cohort. Substantive membership and feeling of belonging are the key to success and someone surviving in a rural practice. Governor Abell commented to clarify that there are differences between a cohort, which is going through law school, and an incubator program, which is helping to grow their practice. Governor Abell commented that he is hearing interest in reaching a group of individuals at law school or earlier, grouped together, given support, offered networking, and given the ability to take that experience and give to others as they come up behind them.

### Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse

Governor Abell opened the meeting to the discussion of job opportunities and clearinghouse. PJ commented that to publicize opportunities, we might want to see if *Bar News* would give free advertising space to a rural practitioner looking to recruit or transition their practice. He also thinks we should talk to law schools about what would be the best way to get a short video to law students. PJ feels that the law schools would know how to promote this best. Cindy suggested a Tik-Tok video as an effective marketing tool. Governor Abell suggested that the STAR Committee could own an in-house clearinghouse of openings in rural communities and be a resource for those looking to relocate into rural areas. Zac commented that there will likely be practitioners looking to exit, and we could better help them find someone to take over their practice in advance of their departure. Rusty commented that the situation Zac described has happened a lot in his area, because of practitioners retiring and having no one to take over. Kevin commented that the WSBA Career Center may be able to allow those in rural communities to post at no cost or at a discount. PJ commented that when pulling articles for rural practice, that we should consider an article about Steve Sackman who is retiring and looking for someone to take over his practice.

### Next Steps/ Conclusion

Governor Abell opened the meeting to any comments or questions members may have regarding today's meeting. Julianne commented that she will circulate a recurring meeting invite via the STAR Committee list serve and an outlook calendar with meeting information. Julianne asked to have any members forward her contact information of anyone who may want to attend future meetings. Governor Abell advised Committee members that there is not a meeting in December and the STAR Committee will meet again in January. Governor Abell recapped the discussions around the charter

initiatives and encouraged to have the Committee law student representatives and Besty meet before the meeting in January to discuss having rural background as a component of diversity on student applications. He also discussed having rural practice fit into LRAP as a talking point for Pipeline and Placement subcommittee to discuss. Governor Abell suggested that the cohort/incubator program could be the centerpiece of the STAR Committee's proposal to the Board of Governors (BOG) in 2022. He also discussed creating a marketing video with drone footage that could possibly promote the cohort idea, a dedicated issue in *Bar News*, job opportunities and clearinghouse and utilizing existing bar resources like the WSBA Career Center. Governor Abell proposed that the three subcommittees meet and discuss between now and the upcoming January meeting.

Julianne commented that subcommittee members may request Zoom accommodations from WSBA for meetings and to reach out to Julianne or WSBA Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant Chelle Gegax for assistance with those requests. Julianne also advised that if STAR Committee members in attendance of subcommittee meetings met or exceeded a quorum of all Committee members, then those meetings are required to be held openly, with prior notice published before the meeting, meeting minutes taken, and WSBA Staff in attendance per the WSBA's Open Meetings Policy and Bylaws. Governor Abell replied that before the next meeting, he will be reaching out to Committee members after this meeting regarding subcommittee membership and next steps.

#### Adjournment

Governor Abell thanked all in attendance and adjourned the meeting at 1:59 pm

**TO:** WSBA STAR Committee Members and Liaisons  
**FROM:** Hunter M. Abell, Chair  
**DATE:** January 17, 2022  
**RE:** Proposed STAR Committee Fellowship Program

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**ACTION/DISCUSSION :** To outline a proposed rural practice Fellowship Program that is designed, implemented, and overseen by the STAR Committee, under the overall authority of the WSBA Board of Governors.

**Background:** On April 17, 2021, the WSBA Board of Governors (“BOG”) approved issuance of a Charter to the WSBA Small Town And Rural (“STAR”) Committee. This effort continued a long-running initiative by the WSBA Rural Practice Project as well as efforts by the Washington Young Lawyers Committee to address the challenges of “legal deserts” in Washington. The STAR Committee is charged with examining the following issues related to practice in rural areas: 1) community education and outreach; 2) possible establishment of a pipeline and placement program; and 3) exploring job opportunities and creation of a potential clearinghouse to match needs in rural areas with interested practitioners.

On October 26, 2021 and November 18, 2021, the STAR Committee held its first two meetings. In addition to engaging in organizational activities, the STAR Committee members explored all three issues presented in the Charter. While discussion covered a broad variety of topics, the bulk of discussion centered on creation of a program that would identify and establish a group of law students, provide education, support, and networking opportunities for those students, and assist placing them in practice in rural areas in Washington.

This memo is designed to build on those discussions and put forward a **draft** proposal for the STAR Committee’s discussion, revision, and improvement.

**Proposal:** Multiple states around the nation have programs that are designed to identify and support law students and practitioners interested in rural practice. Examples include the Rural Practice Incubators Project at the University of Arkansas Bowen School of Law (<https://ualr.edu/law/clinical-programs/rural-practice-incubator-project/>); the Rural Virtual Practice Program created by the Colorado Supreme Court and the Colorado Bar Association (<http://coloradomentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Rural-Mountain-Practice-Program-Handbook-Final.pdf>) ; the Rural Practice Fellowship Program led by the Illinois State Bar Association (<https://www.isba.org/ruralpractice>), and others. At last count, roughly 18 states have some program designed to address the challenges of rural practice. See Rural Committee Research, **Attachment A**.

Based upon review of these programs around the country, I believe that establishment of any program by the STAR Committee must be cost effective, provide measurable results, reflect a partnership between the WSBA and key stakeholders, and reflect the values of rural practice: self-sufficiency, hardiness, and dedication to the community.

Toward that end, I propose the following:

- **Establish a phased ideation approach toward creation of a STAR Committee Fellowship Program (“Program”) with the goal of proposing the Program to the BOG by July 1, 2022;<sup>1</sup>**
- **Subject to feedback during the phased ideation process, the Program comprises two components: 1) a law student Cohort; and 2) practitioners who participate in a 3-year Fellowship;**
- **The Program is designed and overseen by the STAR Committee. Implementation will be done in collaboration with WSBA staff and day to day operations of the Program will be performed by WSBA staff;**
- **The Program is a partnership between the WSBA and Washington’s three law schools;**
- **The Cohort is roughly modeled on the medical school cohort model;**
- **The Cohort comprises six students, with two students from each of Washington’s law schools;**
- **The Cohort meets regularly, is provided resources, training, networking opportunities, and fosters a sense of camaraderie and mission among its members;**
- **Upon graduation and passage of the Bar exam, if Cohort members receive employment and practice in a rural area in Washington, they become part of the Fellowship;**
- **The Fellowship comprises a 3-year program where Fellows participate in the local county bar association, engage with the high schools, local undergraduate institutions, and law schools, and promote rural practice to the broader profession and community;**
- **The Fellows and Cohort meet at least annually to network, provide mutual support, and discuss challenges and opportunities in rural practice; and**
- **Cohort student members and Fellows receive a modest stipend for purposes of networking and training.**

**Cost:** I propose a stipend for Fellows of \$3,000.00 per year. For comparison purposes, that is less than the \$10,000.00 (total) offered by the Illinois Rural Practice Fellowship Program. I further propose the Program be provided \$5,000.00 per year for purposes of facilitating the meeting of the Cohort and the Fellows. These funds

<sup>1</sup> This is an aggressive timeline. The Rural Practice Project recently underwent a phased ideation approach resulting in establishment of the STAR Committee. Given that experience, and the expertise of the STAR Committee members, an expedited timeline may be achievable here.

are to be provided by the WSBA, with potential additional funds from other sources. **Overall budget: \$23,000.00/year.**

**Metrics for Success:** As outlined above, I suggest the Program be established as a pilot program to assess effectiveness and durability. To ensure the viability of the Program, I suggest that it be established for an initial period of **six years**, permitting several Cohort classes the opportunity to begin serving as Fellows in rural areas. I further suggest that measurable metrics for success be measured as follows: 1) continued practice by Fellows in rural areas at the conclusion of the 3-year fellowship; 2) number of outreach efforts by Fellows to local high schools, undergraduate institutions, and law schools; and 3) number of outreach efforts by Fellows and Cohort members to the broader profession through CLEs and articles in the *NW Lawyer*.

**Additional Questions and Ideas for Consideration:**

- Are there additional or better methods to measure success?
- What definition of “rural” should be utilized for placement in the Program? The same definition as utilized by the Rural Practice Project?
- How does the STAR Committee oversee the Program? What does that look like? Quarterly reviews?
- Should we solicit active involvement by one or more members of the Washington Supreme Court to provide both institutional support and visibility?
- Should we start with one law school and then expand? Or simultaneously launch?
- Are there additional funds available? Could the law schools contribute a form of loan forgiveness for Program participants? Would the Washington State Bar Foundation be willing to contribute?
- Are there additional stakeholders that should be involved in the Program? How do we promote the rural communities themselves taking part? The Washington Supreme Court? The Attorney General’s Office? The Tribes?
- Should the Program be named, perhaps after a prominent Washington rural practitioner? Example: William O. Douglas?

**Conclusion:** This Program proposal is still very much a rough draft. I welcome your comments and feedback.

State	Committee?	Name	Entity/Organization	Summary	Alignment w/ STAR Committee Roles	Link
Alabama	No					
Alaska	No					
Arizona	No					
Arkansas	Yes	Rural Practice Incubators Project	University of Arkansas - Bowen School of Law	<p>The goal of the Rural Practice Incubator is to support Bowen alumni in launching viable small or solo practices in rural, underserved Arkansas communities. The 18-month program supports incubator attorneys with training, resources, mentoring, and guidance to assist them in building their professional careers as rural attorneys.</p> <p>The Rural Legal Incubator program helps new attorneys develop innovative, economically viable law practices that increase access to justice for low and moderate income rural Arkansans.</p>	Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities	
California	Yes	Rural Access Committee	California Access to Justice Commission	<p>The Rural Access Committee (previously called the Rural Task Force) of the California Commission on Access to Justice is dedicated to improving the lives of rural Californians. The RAC does this by advocating for parity in funding for legal aid across the state, by issuing reports on the state of access to justice issues in rural California, and by raising the profile of rural attorney "deserts."</p> <p>Members of the task force recently advocated for earmarking a portion of \$20 million in one-time state funding for legal aid to be set aside for rural projects, and the legislature agreed, setting aside \$5 million for rural Californians, undocumented immigrants, and other underserved communities.</p>	Community Education and Outreach	<a href="https://ualr.edu/law/c">https://ualr.edu/law/c</a>
Colorado	Yes	<p>(1) Rural/Virtual Practice Program</p> <p>(2) Agricultural and Rural Law Section (defunct)</p>	<p>(1) Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program</p> <p>(2) Colorado Bar Association</p>	<p>(1) Recognizing the need to address the changing profession and striving to create innovative, new mentoring opportunities, this pilot program is a joint collaboration between the Colorado Supreme Court and the Colorado Bar Association. The goal of the Rural Virtual Practice Program is to match new lawyers in Denver with an established lawyer in a rural or mountain community in a mentoring, clerkship and/or co-counseling relationship.</p> <p>(2) The Agricultural and Rural Law Section concentrates on helping lawyers serve the agricultural interests and the legal needs of rural Colorado. This includes the people who live in rural areas that have the legal needs in their everyday lives.</p> <p>The section plans education programs; including CLEs, articles and publications. It enhances communication among general practitioners and specialists, reports on proposed legislation, and assists lawyers in practicing in rural areas of the state.</p>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://www.calatj.or">https://www.calatj.or</a>
Connecticut	No					<a href="http://coloradomento">http://coloradomento</a>
Delaware	No					
District of Columbia	No					
Florida	No					
Georgia	No					
Hawaii	No					
Idaho	No					

Illinois	Yes	Rural Practice Fellowship Program	Illinois State Bar Association	<p>The Rural Practice Fellowship Program is designed to connect rural and small town law firms looking for law clerks and associates with law students and newer attorneys interested in practicing law in rural parts of Illinois.</p> <p><i>The Rural Practice Summer Fellows</i> program aims to connect law students with rural practitioners and to give them a taste of rural practice before they leave law school. The program includes a \$5000 fellowship grant and mentoring.</p> <p><i>The Rural Practice Associate Fellows</i> program aims to place graduating law students and new attorneys as permanent associates with rural practitioners. The program includes a \$5,000 stipend at the beginning of employment, and an additional \$5,000 stipend if the associate is still working for the same firm after one year.</p>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://www.isba.org/">https://www.isba.org/</a>
Indiana	No					
Iowa	Yes	Rural Practice Committee Program	Iowa State Bar Association	<p>The over-arching goal of the rural practice program is to find opportunities for new, young attorneys in rural areas to replace attorneys who want to retire so that the state's rural population will continue to have convenient access to legal services. Most rural citizens are not able or willing to drive long distances to see a lawyer. Having one or more young, enthusiastic attorneys in their towns, or in nearby towns, who is committed to their communities is a godsend.</p>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://www.iowabar.org/">https://www.iowabar.org/</a>
Kansas	Yes	Rural Law Program	Washburn University School of Law	<p>The program is dedicated to ensuring the availability of effective legal representation in rural communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on identifying rural employment opportunities and preparing students to transition from law school to actual practice.</li> <li>- Externship students are partnered with practicing attorneys or judges to learn the work done by those rural legal professionals.</li> </ul>	Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://www.washburn.edu/law/">https://www.washburn.edu/law/</a>
Kentucky	No					
Louisiana	No					
Maine	Yes	Rural Lawyers Project	University of Maine School of Law	<p>The program has provided 2L and 3L students hands-on experience in rural legal practice by pairing them with lawyers who serve as mentors.</p>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s)	<a href="https://mainelaw.maine.edu/">https://mainelaw.maine.edu/</a>
Maryland	No					
Massachusetts	No					
Michigan	No					
Minnesota	Yes	Agricultural and Rural Law Section	Minnesota State Bar Association	<p>Explores and implements methods of providing access to quality legal assistance for farm families. Other areas addressed include agricultural estate planning, agricultural environmental law, animal waste pollution developments, agricultural business law, U.S.D.A. disaster programs, U.S.D.A. reorganization, and farm credit developments.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agricultural and Rural Law Section Institute each spring</li> <li>- Free and discounted CLE credits</li> <li>- Leadership opportunities on the Section Council</li> <li>- Section-only online community for discussion of relevant topics</li> </ul>	Community Education and Outreach	<a href="https://www.mnbar.org/">https://www.mnbar.org/</a>

Mississippi	No				
Missouri	No				
Montana	Yes	Rural Incubator Project	Montana Legal Services Association	<p>Through RIPL, attorneys will have the opportunity to enhance access to justice by offering affordable and pro bono legal services to low- and moderate-income Montanans and tribal members living in underserved, rural communities.</p> <p>RIPL participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide substantial pro bono and modest means services to low- and moderate-income Montanans and tribal members.</li> <li>- Participate in all RIPL programming, including: CLE sessions, roundtables, and mentorship meetings.</li> <li>- Form their own independent solo or small firm law practice that operates directly in a rural community or offers remote rural services.</li> </ul>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse
Nebraska	Yes	Rural Law Opportunities Program	Nebraska College of Law	<p>The Nebraska State Bar Association increased its efforts in 2013 to manage the shortage of small town lawyers by starting a rural practice initiative. The purpose of the Program is to recruit and retain competent public legal service attorneys and competent attorneys committed to working in designated legal profession shortage areas.</p> <p>The Rural Law Opportunities Program (RLOP) aims to ensure all Nebraskans have access to legal representation by encouraging the practice of law in the state's rural communities. Through the program, students from certain Nebraska areas will study at one of three Nebraska State Colleges or Universities, obtain their legal education at Nebraska Law and then practice in rural areas throughout the state. RLOP was established through a partnership between the University of Nebraska College of Law and Chadron State College, the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Wayne State College.</p>	Pipeline and Placement Program(s)
Nevada	No				
New Hampshire	No				
New Jersey	No				
New Mexico	No				
New York	Yes	Task Force on Rural Justice	New York State Bar Association	<p>The Task Force on Rural Justice shall examine the current state of rural law practice in New York. Topics of investigation will include the impact of rural attorney shortages on access-to-justice, challenges in delivering legal services in rural areas, and the unique practice needs of rural practitioners. The Task Force will make recommendations for potential changes in law and public policy and will identify viable solutions to support rural law practice and greater access-to-justice in New York's rural communities.</p>	Community Education and Outreach
North Carolina	No				
North Dakota	No				

<https://cdn.ymaws.co>

<https://www.nebar.com/page/RPI>

<https://nysba.org/com>

Ohio	Yes	Rural Practice Clerkship	Ohio State Bar Association	<p>With a significant access to justice gap in smaller and rural communities due to the aging of the attorney population, and current job market realities in which new attorneys are having difficulty finding employment, the OSBA launched the Rural Practice Clerkship Pilot Program.</p> <p>Goals of the program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase access to justice in rural counties, with an emphasis on understanding the unique needs of rural communities.</li> <li>- Create employment opportunities and practice experience for soon-to-be new lawyers.</li> </ul>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://www.ohioabar.org">https://www.ohioabar.org</a>
Oklahoma	No					
Oregon	Yes	Justice Across Oregon	Oregon State Bar Association	The Justice Across Oregon Stipend allows continuing law students to explore summer legal opportunities in less populated areas of the state. Rural employment can provide a new lens for viewing legal issues including workers' rights, poverty, family law, immigration, and Indian Law.	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s);	
Pennsylvania	Yes	Agricultural Law Committee	Pennsylvania Bar Association	The Agricultural Law Committee shall study questions and problems affecting rural and agricultural interests in Pennsylvania and monitor and/or make recommendations concerning proposals for legislation or regulations relating to such interests.	Community Education and Outreach	<a href="https://www.osbar.org">https://www.osbar.org</a>
Rhode Island	No					<a href="https://www.pabar.org">https://www.pabar.org</a>
South Carolina	No					
South Dakota	Yes	Rural Attorney Recruitment Program	South Dakota Unified Judicial System	<p>The Unified Judicial System and the State Bar of South Dakota are committed to assuring that all citizens within the State of South Dakota have access to quality attorneys. In 2013, the South Dakota Legislature approved the Recruitment Assistance Pilot Program to address the current and projected shortage of lawyers practicing in small communities and rural areas of South Dakota.</p> <p>This program provides qualifying attorneys an incentive payment in return for five (5) continuous years of practice in an eligible rural county.</p>	Pipeline and Placement Program(s); Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	<a href="https://ujs.sd.gov/Att">https://ujs.sd.gov/Att</a>
Tennessee	No					
Texas	No					
Utah	No					
Vermont	No					
Virginia	No					
Washington	----	----	----	----	----	----
West Virginia	Yes	Rural Practice Scholarship	West Virginia College of Law	Established by the West Virginia State Bar, the Rural Practice Scholarship pays tuition and fees for three years of law school in exchange for the student's commitment to three years of post-graduate legal practice in a rural county.	Pipeline and Placement Program(s)	<a href="https://www.law.wvu.edu">https://www.law.wvu.edu</a>
Wisconsin	Yes	Greater Wisconsin Initiative	State Bar of Wisconsin	The State Bar's Greater Wisconsin Initiative encourages attorneys to consider practicing in Greater Wisconsin. The committee assists in individuals in learning whether rural practice is right for them, and provides attorneys with the resources needed to get started. Wisconsin's rural population tops 1.6 million. With many lawyers approaching retirement age, more and more nonurban communities are at risk of losing access to legal services. Why? As attorneys retire, there aren't always younger lawyers around to take their place.	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s);	<a href="https://www.wisbar.org">https://www.wisbar.org</a>
Wyoming	Yes	Rural Law Center	University of Wyoming College of Law	<p>The Rural Law Center is meant to further three general missions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide service to rural communities and lawyers who practice law in rural areas.</li> <li>- Help prepare students for rural practice and service.</li> <li>- Facilitate scholarly research concerning the law relevant to rural areas and issues.</li> </ul>	Community Education and Outreach; Pipeline and Placement Program(s);	<a href="https://www.uwyo.edu">https://www.uwyo.edu</a>

# New program through Gonzaga, state law schools aims to narrow attorney shortage in central Washington

## Minorities underrepresented among lawyers

By Greg Mason

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Administrators at Heritage University, a small commuter school near Yakima, noticed a trend in tracking what its students did after graduating in the past five years: Only one of them went to law school.

One out of approximately 1,200 graduating undergrads.

Heritage University, a federally recognized Hispanic Serving Institution and Native American Serving Non-Tribal In-

stitution, has instead seen many graduates move on to careers in fields including nursing, teaching and social work. Others have pursued doctorates or moved on to medical school.

"Grads from (Heritage University) do go on to earn advanced degrees in any number of fields," said David Wise, vice president of external affairs at Heritage University, "but we have not been successful in law school matriculation."

The situation draws parallels to the longstanding lack of attorneys in central

Washington, particularly those of Latino or Indigenous descent, said Annette Clark, dean of the Seattle University School of Law.

Of the approximately 31,000 Washington State Bar Association members that live in the state, only around 1,500 (4.8%) reside in eight central Washington counties. That includes lawyers with active and inactive licenses, as well as those serving as judges.

In an effort to bridge the gap, the schools of law at Gonzaga, Seattle University and the University of Washington aim to launch a program this June in partnership with Heritage to give students a sense of

what the life of a lawyer is all about.

The three-week program at Heritage's Toppenish campus will focus on demystifying the law school experience and application process, administrators said. Key programs will include a visit by several Washington Supreme Court justices, a mock law school class and roundtables with minority bar association leaders.

Jacob Rooksby, dean of the Gonzaga School of Law, said the law school has previously attempted to make headway in central Washington through internships in hopes that students would continue

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