

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee

Small Town and Rural Committee Meeting | Virtual Only

Wednesday, January 25, 2022, | 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m.

Via [Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 879 0573 6111 | Passcode: 811616 | Call-in: 888-788-0099

AGENDA

1. Introductions, November Meeting Recaps, and Approval of November Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrusek)
2. WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrusek and Julianne Unite)
3. Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrusek, Betsy Penoyar)
4. CLE/Webinar Update (Karen Duncan)
5. Rural Definition Discussion (Gov. Kari Petrusek and Chelsea Baldwin)
6. Career Center Discount Updates (Julianne Unite)
7. In-Person Meeting Discussion (Gov. Kari Petrusek)
8. Other Business
9. Next Steps/ Conclusion
10. Next Meeting: February 22, 2023
11. Adjournment

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Small Town and Rural Committee Charter

Effective: July 16, 2021
as approved by the
WSBA Board of
Governors

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 Wednesday, November 30, 2022, | 12:13 p.m. – 1:03 p.m. *Virtual meeting via Zoom*

Committee Members Present: Elizabeth Penoyar, Sarah Cuellar, Kathryn Burke, Merf Ehman, Rusty McGuire, Governor Kari Petrasek, Zachary Bryant, Erin Fullner, Allison foreman, Governor Hunter Abell (left at 12:29)

Committee Members Absent: Laurie Powers (excused)

WSBA Staff Present: Julianne Unite – Member Services and Engagement Manager, Chelle Gegax – Member Services and Engagement Administrative Assistant, Karen Duncan – Education Programs Lead

WSBA Board of Governors Liaisons: Sunitha Anjilvel, Mary Rathbone (absent)

Public Attendees Present: Chelsea Baldwin, Stephan Yhann, Erin Lloyd, Michelle Lucas

Introductions, October Meeting Recaps, and Approval of October Meeting Minutes (Gov. Kari Petrasek)

WSBA Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee Chair, Governor Kari Petrasek, called the meeting to order at 12:13 pm. On motion by STAR Committee Member, Rusty McGuire, seconded by STAR Committee Member Kathryn (Katie) Burke, the STAR committee unanimously voted (10-0-0) to approve the October meeting minutes.

WSBA Updates (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

Gov. Petrasek advised that WSBA updated COVID-19 policies for WSBA has been updated to the same policy for in person attendees and volunteers. She advised this could pertain to in person events planned at law schools in the months coming. WSBA Member Services and Engagement Manager, Julianne Unite, advised that this will apply to any bar function and is following CDC guidelines and local requirements. Some exceptions could be the bar exam. Julianne also provided an update on the insurance marketplace for WSBA members; open enrollment goes through January 15, 2023. WSBA has reinstated their PiP (Professionalism in Practice) awards, which is an ongoing award acknowledging Professionalism in Practice.

Subcommittee Report Updates, if any (Subcommittee chairs Laurie Powers, Gov. Petrasek, Betsy Penoyar)

Gov. Petrasek advised the only current report is for the Pipeline Committee. Although STAR Committee member Laurie Powers was not in attendance, she submitted an update via email. Gov. Petrasek gave a huge shout out to Merf Ehman for submitting the proclamation for the Rural Practice Day. There was a STAR Committee networking event on November 15, 2022, and there will be discussion on how to improve at the next subcommittee meeting. Overall, the feedback was very positive. The STAR job fair has been set for March 31, 2023 and will be hosted by Gonzaga. Julianne added that there were 64 attendees at the event and approximately 34 new and young lawyers or law students. STAR Committee Member, Erin Lloyd, commented that she was very happy to see many of her students at the event and thought that the discussion was great, and the event was well attended. STAR Committee Member, Gov. Hunter Abell, commented that he felt it was very well attended as well, and a great mix of those in attendance. Gov. Petrasek thanked those in attendance for putting the event together.

CLE/Webinar (Karen Duncan)

WSBA Education Programs Lead, Karen Duncan, advised the next steps for planning a CLE. A chair would need to be identified for the program to suggest names, topics, etc. This would be a great shorter program, possibly 60-90 minutes. Some topic ideas could include the establishment of the committee, and then have possibly Rusty, or other members discuss their practice, how to get involved, available jobs on the career center, etc. Once a chair is identified, then the WSBA CLE Team can look at dates in January that would work. Karen advised that a timeline of 6 weeks prior to the event date for the agenda, 4 weeks for written materials and 3 weeks for a PowerPoint presentation if included, would be ideal. Rusty volunteered as chair/point person for the first webinar. Karen will look at late January/ early February dates and communicate those options to the STAR Committee.

Hunter left the meeting at 12:29 p.m.

Chelsea left the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Career Center Discount Updates and Discussion (Julianne Unite)

Julianne advised that the discount initiative launched on November 15, 2022, for the free 30 day posting. Since launch, we have received 11 inquiries. Out of the 11, 10 have qualified for the discounted posting. The one that did not qualify was from a firm in Idaho. The position would primarily be in Idaho but would service clients in Pullman and Whitman counties, which would qualify. Julianne wanted to discuss this with the committee before allowing use of the discount code for this inquiry. Gov. Petrasek feels that this should be an exception and should be allowed to post. Also feels that this would apply to firms in Oregon, that would service towns and/or clients in Washington, just across the border. Rusty commented that his office often overlaps between his office and Moscow, Idaho, and feels that area is very rural. He has no issues with extending the job posting offer to this area. Sophia Byrd McSherry commented that some attorneys in Idaho receive contracts to do work in small towns and counties in Washington and it is made known after the fact that they are not licensed in Washington. She feels that this would be an opportunity to ensure that part of the eligibility is that they are licensed in Washington. STAR Committee Member, Merf Ehman, echoed Sherry's comments. On motion by Rusty, seconded by Merf, the STAR Committee voted unanimously (10-0-0) to approved extending the Career Center

Discount opportunity to positions outside of Washington, provided they meet the rural definition, are licensed in Washington or are eligible for the Washington State Bar Exam, and that 50% of the work is in Washington.

Michelle Lucas from the Northwest Justice Project joined the meeting at 12:38 p.m.

Board of Governors Priorities Discussion (Gov. Petrasek)

Gov. Petrasek advised that one of the six priorities that the Board of Governors (BOG) decided would be a focus area was expanding rural and small-town practice. The BOG is taking note of these legal deserts that need assistance in job placement and growth. Gov. Petrasek advised that soon after the beginning of 2023, the committee would be asked for the upcoming year's budget and would like to present a very well-defined budget on how funds will be used. One item previously discussed was a stipend for law students to help during internships in rural areas, and this is something to consider including the any upcoming budgets. Gov. Petrasek would also like to include other outreach initiatives and events when presenting the budget. Julianne advised that the BOG may offer more direction after the first of the year. Should committee members have any suggestions, please reach out to Gov. Petrasek and/or Julianne. STAR Committee member Zachary (Zac) Bryant asked what dollar figure Gov. Petrasek was anticipating for FY24. Gov. Petrasek responded no less than the \$5000 currently budgeted but would also depend on what events were planned for that fiscal year.

One America Volunteer Request Discussion (Gov. Petrasek)

Gov. Petrasek advised that the One America Volunteer Request can be found on page 14 of the meeting materials. One America would like to know if the STAR Committee would be interested in partnering with them and their need for pro bono volunteers. Merf suggested connecting One America with ATJ and Disco, which would be under the guidance of Diana Singleton, with the WSBA. Gov. Petrasek will follow up with Bonnie from One America and refer to Diana.

University of Washington Representative Update (Gov. Petrasek and Julianne Unite)

Gov. Petrasek reintroduced Erin Lloyd and advised that she is currently applying for the UW Rep role and attending as a public attendee for this meeting.

Other Business

Gov. Petrasek also acknowledged Stephan Yhann in attendance for the first time. Stephan lives in Yakima and has a sincere interest in rural practice.

Erin Lloyd left the meeting at 1:00 p.m.

Gov. Petrasek advised that Chelsea Baldwin would be working on updated definitions of "rural" pertaining to the committee, and that Chelsea has found this to be a struggle for other organizations as well.

Next Steps/ Conclusion

There will not be a STAR committee meeting in December. Gov. Petrasek requested that members continue to think of topics for webinars and other events to discuss at the next meeting.

Next Meeting: January 25, 2023

STAR Committee Member Kathryn Burke asked to confirm meeting time for the January meeting. Gov. Petrasek responded that the standing meeting time will be 12:10 p.m.

Adjournment

Gov. Petrasek adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m.

DRAFT

WSBA Board of Governors Goal Setting

Focus Area: Rural Practice
 Purpose: To support the work of the Small Town and Rural (STAR) Committee in implementing solutions to increase rural practice participation in WA State
 What does success look like?: Increased awareness and interest in rural practice opportunities by future and current WSBA members that translates to increased legal practitioners in rural communities throughout WA State.

	Objective	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-Bound
1	Current Task: Education and Community Outreach	Undertake coordinated efforts to educate members and potential members about the unique needs opportunities and benefits of rural practice. (1) Establish a subcommittee focused on education and outreach. (2) Engage in outreach/educational events and activities focused on rural practice. (3) Develop educational CLE on rural practice free to members.	Subcommittee to be established during the first year of operation of STAR Committee (done). STAR Committee hosted a rural practice networking event on November 15th (64 attendees). The STAR Committee is also working with WSBA Communications to devote the November issue of The Bar News to rural practice. The subcommittee also worked with the WA Governor's office to have November 15th declared rural practice day. Plans for future events are underway. STAR Committee is working with WSBA CLE to develop a rural practice CLE with anticipated delivery date in February, 2023	Robust attendance at networking events and CLE and, ultimately, more interest from members/future members in rural practice opportunities. Minor budget implications include direct costs of programming. The CLE is included in the portfolio of WSBA CLE programs.	Directly supports the mission of championing justice, serving the public and the serving the members of the WSBA.	1 is ongoing and 2 and 3 to be delivered in FY23 and ongoing.
2	Current Task: Pipeline and Placement Programs	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. (1) Establish a pipeline subcommittee of STAR. (2) Study alternative programming options including those implemented by other jurisdictions. (3) Bring forward a recommendation to the Board of Governors.	1 was done in FY23, 2 was done in FY22. Subcommittee is currently studying various options for a pipeline and/or placement program with the intention of bringing forward a proposal for the FY24 budget cycle.	Establishment of a pipeline/placement program that is fiscally attainable and sustainable that will increase participation of future and current WSBA members in rural legal practice. The proposal will come with an ongoing budget request to support the proposed program. Unsure at this point of the exact amount of the request and the impact on current levels of staffing.	Directly supports the mission of championing justice, serving the public and the serving the members of the WSBA.	1 and 2 are ongoing and 3 is anticipated for FY24.

3	Objective	Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time-Bound
	Current Task: Job Opportunities and Clearinghouse	Utilize existing and future WSBA resources to support and highlight job opportunities for rural communities. (1) Work with WSBA to expand low cost alternatives for organizations in rural communities to post job opportunities on WSBA Career Center. (2) Engage in rural job fairs.	The STAR Committee worked with WSBA to develop a discount plan for rural organizations who post in the Career Center. The discount is 50% off the normal rate and organizations must be validated by WSBA staff before being approved for the discount. The discount has been approved for a year and usage will be monitored by the STAR Committee to determine how many rural organizations took advantage of the discount and how many positions were filled as a result of the posting/discount. A rural practice job fair is being planned for March, 2023.	Increased access to the Career Center by rural organizations which translates to more awareness and interest in rural practice openings and higher success rates in filling open positions in rural communities. The budget impact is negligible and the discount may actually increase overall revenue because rural organizations that were not utilizing the Career Center due to cost barriers will now do so.	Directly supports the mission of championing justice, serving the public and the serving the members of the WSBA.	The Career Center discount is effective for a year and may be renewed. The job fairs are ongoing.

Footnote:
 The Rural Practice Project Team (RPPT) was constituted approximately 20 months prior to the establishment of the STAR Committee. The RPPT was comprised of BOG members, outside stakeholders from law schools, WYLC members and WSBA staff. The RPPT conducted a survey of all rural members to better understand rural practice in throughout the state in general and to identify issues surrounding rural practice throughout WA State. In addition, the team talked to rural practitioners in every rural county to better understand issues related to specific rural communities. After studying the issue for approximately 18 months, the RPPT recommended the WSBA establish a rural practice committee to study the problem and develop recommendations to bring forth to the Board of Governors. In April, 2021 the BOG established the Small Town and Rural Committee (STAR). The STAR Committee Chair for FY22 was Governor Hunter Abell and under his leadership the STAR Committee laid a strong foundation for the committee's ongoing work in FY23. The STAR Committee Chair in FY23 is Governor Kari Petrasek. The STAR Committee discussed the BOG goal of supporting rural practice at its November meeting.

Small Town and Rural

Defining “small town and rural:”

The U.S. government has at least fifteen (15) different official definitions of the word “rural,” including eleven (11) at the Department of Agriculture alone. Nearly every federal and state-based department, bureau or legal process uses their own definition. The US is not alone in this problem as our Canadian neighbors share a similar issue and a nearly identical proliferation of definitions.

Given the above I focused on the purpose of the committee and what it and the WSBA hopes to achieve –getting attorneys to underserved areas. I used a combination of various definitions to arrive at the two working proposals you see below.

Proposed definition one (1):

Counties with less than 300 people per square mile and towns with fewer than 2,500 people (if located within a disqualified county).

Pro: County by County approach – very easy to manage what qualifies.

Con: May leave out areas that are underserved – but the “city” catch-all may provide a means of managing that.

Proposed definition two (2):

Small Towns and Rural Areas are those which are located at least 40 driving miles away from the large urban areas of Seattle/Tacoma, Spokane and Vancouver/Portland.

Pro: Easy to manage and understand.

Con: May include areas what are not actually underserved.