



WASHINGTON NEW MEMBERS COMMITTEE

Washington New Members Committee

Washington New Members Committee Meeting | Virtual via Zoom

Monday, December 15, 2025, | 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

[Via Zoom](#) | Meeting ID: 899 4611 1517 | Passcode 608920 | Call In 888-788-0099

AGENDA:

1. **Welcome & Introductions; Approval of November Meeting Minutes** – Alex
2. **WSBA Updates** –Chelle, Jordan
 - a. BOG Meeting Updates
3. **Team Updates and Regional Reports** – All
 - a. **Financial Focus CLE** – Chawisa
 - b. **Social Media** – Ariel
 - c. **Legal Lunchbox CLE** - Hanna
 - d. **Mentorship Project Team** – Janta
 - e. **Initiation of Charter Project Team** – Alex
4. **Social Event Planning** – Chelle
 - a. February Bar Exam Social
 - b. Trial Advocacy Program Social
5. **FY26 Swag** – Chelle
6. **New ideas for Next Meeting** – All

Adjournment – Alex

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Washington New Members Committee

Washington New Members Committee Meeting Hybrid, WSBA Offices Saturday, November 15, 2025, | 10:22 a.m. – 2:01 p.m. Meeting Minutes

WNMC Members Present In-Person: Alexander Reaganson, Mason Ji, Chawisa Laicharoenwat, Mackenzie Lloyd, Hanna Harrison, Janta Steele, Fatima Al-Rikabi, Ariel Cook

WNMC Members Present Remote: Michelle Hesse (arrived 11:00 a.m.)

WNMC Members Absent: Bethany Nolan (unexcused), Steven Brown (excused), Thomas Garvey (unexcused), Stephan Yhann (excused), Matthew Rommelmann (excused), Makenzie Spinks (unexcused)

Board of Governors Liaison: Jordan Couch

WSBA Staff: Chelle Gegax – WSBA Member Services and Engagement Specialist, Vanessa Sweeney – WSBA Member Services and Engagement Program Coordinator, Paris Eriksen – Manager of Volunteer Engagement

Welcome & Introductions; Approval of October Meeting Minutes – Alex

WNMC Chair, Alexander Reaganson, opened the meeting at 10:22 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance. On motion by WNMC Member Ariel Cook, seconded by WNMC Past Chair Mason Ji, the WNMC approved the October WNMC Meeting minutes (8-0-0).

Introductions were made by everyone in attendance, both in person and remote.

WSBA Updates – Chelle, Jordan

BOG Meeting Updates

WNMC Board of Governors Liaison Jordan Couch provided an update on the BOG: Francis Adawale is the new president, focusing this year on access to justice, especially in rural communities. The WSBA's strategic goals remain unchanged. Yesterday, the BOG met with law school deans to discuss their needs and collaboration opportunities. There is a desire to advance debt relief initiatives and support funding for law students serving rural areas – a topic that has garnered interest from the BOG. Additionally, the Washington State Bar Foundation, a separate entity under the WSBA, is exploring grant opportunities for pro bono work. While nothing has been finalized, discussions are ongoing.

Washington New Members Committee Orientation - Chelle

There was a discussion about the budget and paying for awards for FY25 outgoing committee members, which has traditionally been covered by the committee. Additionally, there's an award for the immediate past chair to recognize their term. WSBA Member Services and Engagement Specialist Chelle Gegax noted this practice isn't set in stone and asked the WNMC to discuss and potentially vote on whether to

continue having the immediate past chair's award come from the budget or maintain the current practice. It was suggested it should be included in the budget, noting that we are spending only a small portion of the available funds.

On motion by Ariel, seconded by Mason, and abstention by Mason, the WNMC approved paying for the outgoing chair award out of 58175 (7-0-1).

The discussion continued around social events, particularly the After Bar Social, scheduled for Tacoma in February and Yakima in July. The Committee will likely look to the Yakima area representative for assistance and participation in Yakima. If you know any potential sponsors for the event, please begin networking now.

A significant part of outreach budget line item 55266 was used to purchase promotional items. The committee discussed swag. The committee discussed the matter of swag. The previously ordered swag is now outdated due to the name change. Ariel suggested that former committee members might be interested in this surplus and recommended distributing it through the mentorship program if feasible. Suggestions for new swag items included mugs, socks, beanies, wearable items, and similar products to those distributed previously. Additionally, there was a discussion about swag specifically intended for committee members, such as name tags. These items would be categorized under committee expenses rather than outreach.

On motion by Mason, seconded by WNMC Member Janta Steele, the WNMC approved to reorder to replace current swag with new logo and a dollar amount considering 10% inflation from last year (8-0-0).

Regarding swag for the committee, Chelle will research options that doesn't require a minimum quantity, which would allow folks to choose, and present at the next WNMC meeting.

Chelle continued and led a discussion about WNMC expenses. Chelle encouraged the committee to spend out of this line item and suggested using it for expenses related to the American Bar Association (ABA). This year's ABA expense for Mason fell just under \$1700.

Mason explained that the American Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division divides the country into 30 districts, typically encompassing 1-2 states each. Our district, District 29, includes Oregon. Each district has a representative who serves the entire district, with the role alternating between Washington and Oregon every three years. The WSBA has five positions available for representatives, so we need to submit the names of individuals interested in attending.

There was a suggestion to request an interim budget increase from the Board of Governors (BOG) prior to those meetings, allowing the WNMC to determine the exact budget required to send a certain number of attendees. Chelle noted that this request would need to be addressed during the February budget reforecasting. Alex asked if sending three committee members to the ABA midyear meeting would exceed our budget. Chelle responded that it would be clearer after the current meeting and reviewing everyone's expense reports. Mason indicated that the decision on which committee members will attend should be made today, as the deadline to submit names to the BOG is around December 1st. Janta asked for clarification on whether there are five spots or three. Alex clarified that sending five people would exceed our budget and could interfere with our ability to conduct in-person meetings.

The discussion briefly turned to other meetings and events, and Chelle shared that the biggest expense is venue and catering (with catering costs coming out of the outreach and events line item). Additionally, traveling to the other side of the state, it is \$1000 just for venue space at Gonzaga Law School. It was suggested to have a current student request the meeting space as it may be more cost effective. WNMC Member Hanna Harrison offered to assist with finding someone at Gonzaga. Mason noted connecting with Chelle as Perkins Coie is looking to sponsor an event, too.

Alex steered the conversation back to sending folks to the ABA Midyear Meeting and asked if there were any concerns. Ariel summarized, sounds like we can vote now to send three committee members to the ABA Midyear Meeting in February using the appropriate budget, and at the next budget reallocation ask the BOG for additional funds to allow for WNMC in-person meetings, and to send committee members to the July ABA meeting. On motion by Ariel, seconded by Janta, the WNMC voted to send three members of leadership, the chair, chair-elect, and immediate past chair to the ABA Midyear Meeting in February 2026 (8-0-0). Jordan reminded the WNMC to be sure you get your value out the people going to the ABA, and clarified those attending will be attending as individuals, not representing WSBA. Mason will email BOG President Elect Kari Petrasek the names.

The last budget item discussed was around line item 58525, which was the scholarship for going to the ABA meeting, grants and donation. Chelle clarified there is not a line item this year because it hasn't been spent in four years. Grants and donations are tied to more public facing things. And I would rather the general be increased and not the scholarship because it sounds like the general is more flexible and that's why we move things around back in February with that in mind. Ariel suggested, in December or January, to create a project team to create a proposal for our budget increase.

Alex announced that, as per the vote taken at the October WNMC meeting, the leadership team has selected Janta to serve as chair-elect. The next step is to include this decision on the BOG's consent calendar for approval in January. Since Janta represents Pierce County, this will leave a vacancy. Ariel proposed advertising all vacancies on LinkedIn and Facebook. Chelle mentioned there is a candidate interested in filling the South Central region vacancy. Chelle explained that although Ariel no longer resides or works in Olympia, she can continue to serve as the Olympia Region representative because of connections to the area remain unchanged, and there are no rules preventing a representative from completing their term.

During the orientation, Mason volunteered to write an article for BarNews, and Jordan offered assistance to anyone interested in getting started to contact him.

During the orientation, Chelle reminded the WNMC that if a member will miss a meeting to please email Chelle and Vanessa. Alex added that we do still have folks who no-show. The current guidance states that if a committee member has two or more unexcused absences, they may be subject to removal. As there are a few WNMC members who have multiple unexcused absences it was decided to potentially include this on the December meeting agenda, or once the charter team is formed and go into details at that time.

During the orientation, it was noted that when project teams introduce new ideas, it is important to mention if a committee member has knowledge of matters that may require substantial work or deliberation by the committee, please ensure that this information is communicated in a timely manner. This will allow engagement in meaningful discussions and take appropriate actions as necessary.

Law School Engagement Discussion – Alex

Arianna Velasco, University of Washington law student representative, proposed a networking event between Seattle University and University of Washington Law School. Additionally, she suggested including Gonzaga University virtually, as it may be challenging for students to travel from Spokane. The objective is to connect students, particularly new members, with others in their fields of interest. We plan to organize two events, targeting February, March, or April. One event will be hosted at Seattle University, and the other at UW Law School. We are currently determining our budget, but we aim to cater the events towards 1Ls, 2Ls, and 3Ls, addressing questions such as the role of an associate and lateral career moves. Matt Glazer, Seattle University law student representative, concurred with Arianna's proposal and emphasized the importance of informing participants about the resources offered by the Washington State Bar Association to students and new lawyers. Alex noted that this initiative aligns with our goal to engage more with law schools and suggested having an in-person committee meeting and a social event at one of the schools on the west side, scheduling the west side event in February. Matt will gather Seattle University venue information. Ariel mentioned that based on experience with student organizations and government at Seattle University, it is unlikely that hosting the event there would incur a venue fee.

Law student representatives will check the availability of event space for February 12th or 13th and will confirm with Chelle. A follow-up poll will be conducted to determine the availability of committee members for in-person attendance. Tentatively, the committee has penciled in a meeting on Thursday, February 12th at 3:00 PM, followed by a social at 4:00 PM. Ariel requested the communications team to create a graphic for the event.

FY26 Project Teams

Social Media – Ariel

Ariel shared an update on LinkedIn and Facebook analytics, noting that there hasn't been much change since we haven't posted anything this month due to awaiting approval from communications. The advice column proposal is still pending approval, while the Spotlight feature didn't need such a process and is ready to proceed. Given that a formal project proposal is required for the advice column, we need to form a project team specifically for it. The social media project team could be separate and small, allowing us to manage general social media activities quickly and efficiently. The larger advice column team would handle ongoing contributions to the column. WNMC Member Fatima Al-Rikabi, WNMC Member Chawisa Laicharoenwat, Hanna, Mason, and Janta all volunteered to be part of the advice column project team. Ariel will share a mock-up with the team to aid in creating the project proposal. The plan is to have a monthly column where new members can submit questions anonymously, and the project team will select one to answer each month, posting it on LinkedIn, Facebook, and eventually Instagram. The project proposal needs approval from Communications General Council and the Executive Director. Once approved, a formal posting schedule can be established. The advantage of social media platforms is that posts can be scheduled in advance, reducing the need for constant manual updates. The committee spotlight and the new member spotlight have already received approval, so those can be posted first. Initially, posts can be made twice per month. Once the advice column is approved, it can be added to the monthly posting schedule, resulting in three posts per month.

WNMC Charter Generative Discussion – Paris Eriksen, Jordan Couch

WSBA Manager of Volunteer Engagement Paris Eriksen kicked off the discussion with a brief history of the evolution of what initially began as the Young Lawyer Section in 1982 and reconstituted to the Young Lawyer Division in 1986, followed by the transition to what was known as the Washington Young Lawyers Committee in 2012 (now the Washington New Members Committee). Paris noted that the shift from division to committee was driven by a program review that questioned the cost-effectiveness of the division model. The committee structure was seen as more aligned with organizational goals and resource allocation.

The session opened with a comparative look at how other bar associations support new and aspiring lawyers. The King County Bar Association, for example, has a division that represents diverse interests and provides opportunities for education, mentoring, and networking. The Oregon State Bar's ONLD (Oregon New Lawyers Division) helps new members transition into the profession and aligns them with the bar's mission and values. Idaho's section focuses on promoting the interests of young and newly admitted lawyers, while Nevada's Young Lawyers Section emphasizes assimilation into the profession, leadership development, and public engagement. The ABA was also cited for its national network and resources that support early-career lawyers both professionally and personally.

These examples were not meant to dictate structure but to inspire ideas and stimulate discussion about what might work best for the committee. The group was encouraged to think creatively and expansively about their own goals and structure.

Identifying and Understanding Key Audiences

The group then turned to defining their primary and secondary audiences. The core audience was identified as "new members," broadly defined as individuals within ten years of bar admission. This includes recent law graduates, those who have relocated to Washington, and individuals entering law as a second career. The group emphasized the importance of inclusivity, noting that many members may live outside Washington but still require access to resources and support.

There was a robust discussion about the value of being both inclusive and practical. While it's important to cast a wide net, it's also necessary to be discerning in how resources are allocated. Law students were highlighted as a critical audience, with distinctions made between 1Ls, 2Ls, and 3Ls, each of whom has different needs and touchpoints. Other important stakeholders included law school deans, staff, career counselors, and even the public at large.

The group also discussed the importance of stakeholder analysis—understanding the varying levels of engagement and influence different groups have, and tailoring strategies accordingly.

Current Needs and Challenges Facing New Lawyers

Participants identified several pressing challenges:

- **Student Loan Debt:** A major concern for lawyers within their first ten years of practice.

- **Lack of Mentorship:** Many new lawyers feel unsupported, especially in smaller or rural communities. Formal mentorship programs are limited, and informal support is inconsistent.
- **Isolation and Burnout:** The transition from law school to practice is often abrupt and overwhelming. Many new lawyers feel isolated, especially those who graduated during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Disconnect Between Law School and Practice:** Law schools often focus on appellate or transactional work, leaving graduates unprepared for real-world legal tasks. Practical training is minimal, and students are expected to seek it out independently.
- **COVID-19 Disruptions:** The pandemic disrupted traditional support networks and created a cohort of lawyers with limited professional connections.

Several participants shared personal stories of being “thrown in” without guidance, describing their early years as a “baptism by fire.” Others noted that law school did little to prepare them for the realities of practice, and that meaningful learning often came from clinic work or post-graduation experiences.

Models for Practical Training

The group discussed alternative models for bridging the gap between law school and practice. British Columbia’s mandatory three-month practical training program was highlighted as a strong example. This program includes instruction on basic legal skills, such as writing demand letters, preparing motions, and courtroom advocacy. Participants expressed interest in developing a similar optional course in Washington, potentially offered between the bar exam and the release of results.

Seattle University’s pretrial and trial advocacy courses were mentioned, but participants noted that these were often too theoretical or disconnected from real practice. Timing and integration with actual legal work were seen as critical to the effectiveness of such training.

Strategic Vision: What Success Looks Like

The group outlined a vision for success over the next three to five years:

- **Established Programs:** A robust, well-utilized program that helps new members acclimate to the legal profession in Washington.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Regular collection and analysis of data on new member needs, including post-licensure surveys and feedback from mentors and clients.
- **Increased Engagement:** Stronger connections with law schools, bar sections, and other committees. More active participation in section liaison roles and leadership opportunities.
- **Pro Bono Empowerment:** Infrastructure and partnerships that enable new lawyers to engage in pro bono work, including malpractice coverage and supervision through nonprofit organizations.
- **Visibility and Influence:** Becoming a trusted resource for the Board of Governors and other stakeholders, capable of providing insights and recommendations on new member issues.

Activities, Outputs, and Partnerships

To achieve these goals, the group proposed several key activities:

- **Events and Outreach:** Hosting in-person and virtual events at law schools across the state, including networking mixers and educational forums.
- **Data Collection:** Implementing surveys and feedback mechanisms to gather insights from new members, mentors, and even clients.
- **Collaborative Infrastructure:** Using Microsoft Teams to share documents, store meeting minutes, and facilitate project work.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaborating with the Pro Bono Public Service Committee, Access to Justice Board, and other bar entities. Supporting the implementation of alternative licensure pathways.
- **Mentorship Expansion:** Enhancing the MentorLink program and creating new opportunities for mentorship and peer support.

Governance and Structural Considerations

The group discussed the importance of structure and accountability. Concerns were raised about attendance and quorum, with suggestions to include participation expectations in the charter. Ideas included requiring members to serve on at least one subcommittee and revisiting the geographic representation model to better reflect current needs.

There was also discussion about involving non-committee members in project work as a way to increase capacity and engagement. The group emphasized the importance of being flexible and responsive to changing needs, and of revisiting the charter and strategic goals on a regular basis.

Next Steps and Meeting Planning

To maintain momentum, the group agreed to schedule a follow-up meeting in December. This session would continue the generative discussion and begin drafting the charter. A smaller project team was formed to work on the draft between meetings. The group discussed the logistics of scheduling a meeting in December, quorum requirements, and the distinction between full committee meetings and project team meetings. The group would like to include Paris in the December meeting.

A scheduling poll will be sent out, and relevant data and demographic information would be gathered in advance. The group also discussed the importance of inviting stakeholders from other committees to future meetings to ensure alignment and collaboration.

Adjournment

Alex adjourned the meeting at 2:01 p.m.

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