

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

MEMO

To:	President Rajeev Majumdar and the WSBA Board of Governors
From:	WSBA Diversity Committee
Date:	June 18, 2020
Re:	Proposal for the Board of Governors

In the wake of the recent events around racial injustice and in an effort to respond to the WA Supreme Court's recent call to action, the Diversity Committee respectfully submits this proposal to the Board of Governors (BOG).

The Diversity Committee's primary purpose is to implement the [WSBA Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#), which outlines the WSBA's inside-out approach to equity in the profession. The inside-out philosophy holds that a significant inward focus is the best foundation for impacting diversity, inclusion, and equity in the legal profession. Investing in the BOG's development of cultural competency and awareness of disparities in the communities we serve, directly impacts how decision making, member engagement, and bar services are approached and implemented.

The inside-out approach is consistent with the Supreme Court's call to action in its [recent letter](#):

Finally, as individuals, we must recognize that systemic racial injustice against black Americans is not an omnipresent specter that will inevitably persist. It is the collective product of each of our individual actions—every action, every day. It is only by carefully reflecting on our actions, taking individual responsibility for them, and constantly striving for better that we can address the shameful legacy we inherit. We call on every member of our legal community to reflect on this moment and ask ourselves how we may work together to eradicate racism.

It is with this hope that the Diversity Committee respectfully requests that the BOG publicly recommit to the inside-out approach to diversity, equity and inclusion to create a more diverse and equitable legal profession to fight against continued racial injustices in our society. Specifically, we request that the BOG take the following actions which are consistent with the WSBA Diversity and Inclusion Plan, the Board of Governors WSBA Values, and the commitments made by the [WA Race Equity and Justice Initiative](#), of which WSBA is a member:

- Commit to ensuring that race equity is reflected in policies and practices for BOG recruitment, selection, priority-setting, governance, organizational culture, and communications; understanding that diversity builds strength and prevents blind spots created by homogenous leadership organizations

- Learn techniques and tools for reducing and eliminating implicit and explicit bias, and invest in meaningful training to understand the importance of recognizing our own biases and moving forward to fight against systemic injustice.
- Ensure that the BOG is inclusive to the entire legal profession, including voices from marginalized communities;
- Approve and fully support President Majumdar’s proposal to create WSBA’s George Floyd Equity and Disparity Work Group; and
- Fully support efforts to require licensed legal professionals to complete at least one ethics credit in the topic of equity, inclusion and the mitigation of bias per each three year MCLE reporting period.

Further, as this memo has been developed, the Board of Governors is in the process of electing a person to be At-Large Governor for a 3-year term beginning in late September 2020. It is important that the person elected is from a historically underrepresented group who has faced legal and social exclusion in our State and Nation’s history. That person should also be best suited to not only represent, but report back to Diversity Stakeholders, most of whom are representatives of Minority Bar Associations. We encourage the members of the BOG to give serious consideration and elect someone who can best work with their colleagues on the BOG and with the stakeholders from diverse and historically underrepresented people and groups.

As President Majumdar stated in his proposal: *“There is no equity without access to the justice our legal system can provide, and there is no access to justice without our profession doing its part to solve problems. It is up to each one of us to stand up and speak for others who cannot...”*

We hope that the BOG will take this opportunity to recommit to its stated diversity, inclusion and equity values and take the next steps needed to demonstrate the WSBA’s inside-out approach and ultimately make our rules, courts, laws and profession more equitable.