

Wyoming State Bar Board of Officers & Commissioners Meeting

June 12, 2026
Hampton Inn & Suites
Pinedale, Wyoming

In Attendance: P. Craig Silva, President; Alison O. Gee, President-Elect (via Zoom); Kelly M. Neville, Treasurer; Jennifer L. Kirk, Vice President; James T. Whiting, Past President; Christopher G. Humphrey, First Judicial District Commissioner; Kylie M. Waldrip, Second Judicial District Commissioner; Jason Petri, Third Judicial District Commissioner; Scott E. Kolpitcke, Fifth Judicial District Commissioner; Clayton M. Melinkovich, Ninth Judicial District Commissioner; Kayla A. Albertson, Chair, Young Lawyer Section; Sharon Wilkinson, Executive Director; Mark W. Gifford, Bar Counsel and Cathy Duncil, Admissions Director

Absent: Kevin K. Kessner, Fourth Judicial District Commissioner; Kyle A. Ferris, Sixth Judicial District Commissioner; Emily S. Madden, Seventh Judicial District Commissioner and Anne K. Wasserburger, Eighth Judicial District Commissioner

President P. Craig Silva called the meeting to order at 12:31 p.m. on Friday, June 12, 2026.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Vice President Jennifer Kirk made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Scott Kolpitcke seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Kelly Neville shared that we are a little over half-way through the fiscal year. She shared that Executive Director Sharon Wilkinson and Cathy Duncil, Bookkeeper, have begun the budgeting process for the 2026/2027 fiscal year. She encouraged any board members to chime in if they have anything they wish to see in the proposed budget.

President-Elect Alison Gee encouraged the staff to increase the budget for Annual Meeting speakers, as she thinks it is important to ensure we are attracting quality speakers.

Commissioner Clayton Melinkovich made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Past President James Whiting seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Admissions Report

Cathy Duncil reported that there are 71 applicants signed up to sit for the July bar exam. Of those, 58 are University of Wyoming College of Law graduates. She shared that the staff and the Board of Law Examiners (BLE) worked on significant amendments to the Admissions Rules in order to accommodate the NextGen bar exam, which Wyoming will begin administering in

July 2027. She reported that the proposed rules amendments are awaiting approval from the Supreme Court.

Cathy Duncil reported that the Supreme Court has indicated that it will adopt the BLE's recommended cut score of 620 on the NextGen bar exam, which correlates with the current Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) cut score of 270.

Cathy Duncil shared that members of the BLE, the Character and Fitness Committee, Bar staff and representatives of the Court attended the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) Annual Bar Admissions Conference in Philadelphia last month and it was very beneficial, as she learned more about the NextGen bar exam.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that when they put the proposed amendments to the Admissions Rules out for member comment, they received lengthy comments from Julie Hill, Dean of the UW College of Law, and Alan Romero, Associate Dean, encouraging the Bar to adopt a lower cut score of 610.

Cathy Duncil shared that she has only seen one state that lowered its cut score after adopting the NextGen. All other states have correlated their cut score with their UBE cut score.

Office of Bar Counsel Report

Mark Gifford shared that since he prepared his written report for today's meeting, the number of disciplinary complaints has increased. His office has received a total of 72 complaints this year. He reported that his office is seeing more complaints generated by AI, which is not altogether a negative thing, as the complaints are more coherent and the complainants are clearly relying on AI to identify what rules were potentially violated. Mr. Gifford reported that for several years, they received 115-120 complaints per year, but he anticipates eclipsing 150 complaints this year.

Mark Gifford reminded the Board that Brandon Booth, Deputy Bar Counsel, has been on board for over two months and he is very effective in his new role. Mr. Gifford reported that Mr. Booth is very smart, a quick study and exhibits excellent judgment. He reported that he and Mr. Booth field 5-10 Ethics Hotline calls per day. He shared that Mr. Booth's criminal law background has been instrumental in some of the Ethics Hotline calls, and he is learning a lot from Mr. Booth.

Mark Gifford reported that he and Brandon Booth attended the ABA Center for Professional Responsibility on the campus of UCLA last month and it was a pleasure introducing Mr. Booth to his colleagues.

Mr. Gifford reported that his office is handling two Client Protection Fund claims. He reminded the Board that Riverton lawyer Nick Hopkins passed away in December. He reported that Cody Jerabek was appointed as Mr. Hopkins surrogate. Mr. Gifford also shared that he anticipates receiving some claims as a result of Laramie lawyer Vaughn Neubauer's suspension.

Commissioner Melinkovich stated that he was surprised to see so many Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL) investigations in Mr. Gifford's report. Mark Gifford shared that three of those are against one provider and the Secretary of State's Office has intervened in those. He explained that there is an LLC mill in Sheridan where they appear to be lawyers, but they are not.

Member Comments Re: Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws of the Wyoming State Bar

Mark Gifford reminded the Board that the proposed amendments to the Bylaws of the Wyoming State Bar were put out for member comments. He reminded the Board that the rule amendments would prohibit members not residing in Wyoming to vote for the Bar's ABA Delegates or the Bar's representatives on the Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC).

After reviewing the comments, Commissioner Melinkovich referenced the one pertaining to the Fourteenth Amendment and shared that he does not agree that it is an issue.

Mark Gifford shared that he thinks the members voicing concerns about the proposed amendments simply do not want to lose their vote and he thinks they have a point.

President-Elect Gee made a motion to approve the proposed Bylaws amendments. Commissioner Melinkovich seconded the motion but wished to flesh out the Fourteenth Amendment issue. He stated that the Bar is not funded by public funds and it is not a governmental entity.

President-Elect Gee shared that she thought it was important to ensure the folks who are representing the state of Wyoming have their practice in Wyoming. She feels it is important that Wyoming attorneys who practice in Wyoming should be the ones making the decisions that effect attorneys practicing in the state.

President-Elect Gee also shared that the amendments to the Bylaws are to ensure that members are not voting for more than one ABA Delegate. She also thinks it is rational to have lawyers who practice in Wyoming involved in the selection of who is involved in the judicial selection process. She shared that she is licensed in three states and she does not vote on any other ABA Delegates or judicial selection committees.

Treasurer Neville pointed out that even though the out-of-state members may have an interest in the lawmaking process in Wyoming, they do not have the ability to vote for members of the Wyoming Legislature.

Executive Director Wilkinson offered to survey the surrounding states to see how those bars handle nonresident voting.

President-Elect Gee made a motion to table her previous motion. Commissioner Melinkovich seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Executive Director Wilkinson stated that this topic of discussion will be on the August meeting agenda for further discussion.

2025-2027 Strategic Plan Progress Report

Executive Director Wilkinson walked the Board through the progress report and made special mention of the rural practice initiative and the law students that are benefitting from that.

Direction for 2026/2027 Proposed Budget

Executive Director Wilkinson mentioned that she and Cathy Duncil have begun to prepare the proposed budget for the 2026/2027 fiscal year. She reminded the Board that the Estate Planning, Elder Law, Trust & Probate Section proposed that the Bar fund the Cannon Financial CLEs for its section members this current fiscal year, and the Board approved that request. Executive Director Wilkinson asked for some direction as to whether this should continue for the next fiscal year. She referenced the document she shared in the materials showing how many members have taken advantage of those CLE programs so far this year. She also mentioned that the Bar paid Cannon Financial \$3,780 for these programs this year.

President Silva shared that he has participated in the Cannon Financial CLEs and they are some of the best CLE programs in which he has ever participated.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that the Estate Planning Section currently has 219 members, which makes it the Bar's largest section (with the exception of the Young Lawyer Section, whose members are auto-enrolled and pay no fee).

Treasurer Neville pointed out that those section members each pay \$25 to belong to the section, so they are definitely covering the cost of the CLE programs. She spoke in favor of continuing this next year.

Considering that the majority of the section members are not taking advantage of the "free" CLE programs, Cathy Duncil wondered about the section leadership posting to their listserv to help market the programs.

Executive Director Wilkinson also asked for some direction on the \$25,000 matching grant for the Wyoming Foundation for Civil Justice (formerly Equal Justice Wyoming Foundation). She walked the Board through the history of the matching grant. She also reminded the Board that the Foundation has gone through significant changes due to the Court not allowing Angie Dorsch to serve as the Executive Director of both Equal Justice Wyoming and its Foundation. She reminded the Board that she serves on the Foundation Board and described the shift to its management. Executive Director Wilkinson also shared that the Foundation Board has discussed possibly contracting with a professional fundraiser.

Vice President Kirk shared that she and Cathy Duncil serve on the Equal Justice Wyoming Advisory Committee and they had a meeting last week. She shared that due to all of the changes in the last year, she would hate to see the Bar pull this funding from the Foundation. She thinks the Foundation has done a lot of good work.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that this decision did not need to be made today. She recommended budgeting for the \$25,000 matching grant and reminded the Board that the proposed budget as a whole will be a topic of discussion at the August meeting.

Jackrabbit Bar Conference Update

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that she attended the Jackrabbit Bar Conference last week in Santa Fe, New Mexico, along with Treasurer Neville, Commissioner Kylie Waldrup, Commissioner Emily Madden and Mark Gifford. Attendees discussed the sessions in which they participated and the good camaraderie with representatives from other states.

Judicial Performance Evaluation Committee

President-Elect Gee reminded the Board that she and Devon O'Connell serve as non-voting members of the Judicial Selection Committee. She shared that they meet once per month and are putting a Request for Information (RFI) together to solicit vendors which could potentially assist the committee in structuring an effective evaluation tool for the judiciary. She shared that the RFI will hopefully go out in July.

President's Report

President Silva reminded the Board that we set a goal of \$30,000 in sponsorships for the Annual Meeting and we have generated \$12,500 so far. After reading the list of sponsors, he reported that he is planning to send an email to the Natrona County Bar indicating how much he will be contributing as a sponsor and encourage his colleagues to match his contribution.

President Silva shared that he is aware of several great candidates who are running for seats in the Wyoming Legislature. He reported being pleased that so many candidates support the judiciary and the University of Wyoming.

President-Elect's Report

President-Elect Gee reminded the Board that the Executive Committee will be doing Executive Director Wilkinson's performance evaluation this summer and it will be discussed with her at the August meeting. Executive Director Wilkinson indicated that she would get that on the Executive Committee's calendars.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Wilkinson provided the historical response rates on the Bar Member Survey to demonstrate the steady decline in participation and wondered how the Board wished to handle the 2027 survey if we conduct a survey at all. She reminded the Board that the current survey is approximately 50 questions. She reminded the Board that the purpose of the survey is to collect feedback from the membership to guide the discussions at Strategic Planning about our path forward for the next two years. After discussion, it was agreed that Executive Director Wilkinson will put a pared down survey before the Board for consideration at a future meeting.

Executive Director Wilkinson provided an overview of the nominations she has received thus far for the Bar's officers, commissioners, ABA Delegate and the Judicial Nominating Commission. She reminded the Board that nominations are due to her July 1st.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that she learned from staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts that the judiciary will not be hosting its Judicial Conference at the WYO Sports Ranch where the Bar's Annual Meeting will be held. She shared that the sports ranch is not conducive to the programs and break-out needs of the judiciary. She reported that the judges will still register for the conference through the Bar and the judges will still be present at the Judicial Luncheon and the Welcome Reception. However, she reported that the Bar could not count on the Judicial Branch's sponsorship this year. Executive Director Wilkinson assured the Board that this was in no way a reflection of the judges not wanting to have a joint conference and she believes that we will go back to a joint conference for the 2027 Annual Meeting in Gillette.

Executive Director Wilkinson reported that she and Cathy Duncil have noticed a decline in the number of lawyers requesting reimbursement for their administrative expenses associated with their pro bono work. She sent a broadcast email to the membership in May, which resulted in seven reimbursement requests totaling over \$4,500. She plans to continue to market these funds and encourage more members to take advantage of this.

Executive Director Wilkinson shared that she and President-Elect Gee have decided to host next year's Strategic Planning session at the Saratoga Hot Springs & Resort. There is availability June 11-12, 2027, and asked if anybody had a conflict with those dates. There being none, she indicated that she would get that scheduled and get a "save the date" on the Board members' calendars.

Young Lawyer Section Report

Kayla Albertson, Chair of the Young Lawyer Section, shared that the section's leadership council is currently discussing who is interested in serving on the council next year. She also reported that the section has an interest in partnering with Cody Jerabek, Wyoming Lawyer Assistance Program (WyLAP) Director, to coordinate a CLE program to heighten the aware of WyLAP to young lawyers. The section council is also discussing doing a program for young lawyers simply highlighting what the Bar does.

Commissioner Reports

- ***First Judicial District*** – Commissioner Chris Humphrey shared that he surveyed the lawyers in his judicial district to gauge their interest in getting the Laramie County Bar Association active again. He shared that of the 500+ lawyers in his district, 35 of them responded to the survey and 11 of them indicated they may be interested. He reported that six lawyers have volunteered to help him. Commissioner Humphrey reported that the judges in Laramie County are interested in having an active local bar. He also shared that he is hearing a lot of complaints from his constituents about e-Filing. He has asked them to provide him with specific examples and docket numbers and plans to work with them to resolve these issues.

- ***Second Judicial District*** – Commissioner Waldrip did not have anything specific to report; however, Treasurer Neville reported that the Albany County Bar Association elected new leadership.
- ***Third Judicial District*** – Commissioner Jason Petri reported that the Sweetwater County Sheriff is not seeking reelection. He shared that Judge Stout just stepped into his new role last week. He also shared that Judge Stith has been on the bench for a few months now and he has heard good things. Commissioner Petri shared that Judge Robinson is interested in getting the Sweetwater County Bar active again.
- ***Fifth Judicial District*** – Commissioner Kolpitcke shared that the Park County Bar Association had its first meeting in years and David Hill was elected to serve as Chair. He has received positive feedback from lawyers glad that it is active again.
- ***Seventh Judicial District*** – In Commissioner Emily Madden’s absence, President Silva commended her on being an effective commissioner. He shared that they had a CLE on blockchain and the Supreme Court is scheduled to come to Casper in September. He reported that the Natrona County Bar Association also has new leadership.
- ***Ninth Judicial District*** – Commissioner Melinkovich shared that he will attend the Federal Law Enforcement meeting next week in Lander, so he plans to stop in on some of his constituents. He shared that he will not be seeking reelection for his Commissioner’s seat, as his judicial district has a tradition of rotating between Sublette, Teton and Fremont Counties. He shared that he has heard from two lawyers in Teton County who are interested in serving.

Board/Committee Liaison Reports

- ***Continuing Legal Education Committee*** – President Silva shared that planning this year’s Annual Meeting has been a lot of work. He provided an overview of the CLE programs the committee has planned.
- ***Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions Committee*** – Commissioner Melinkovich shared that the committee is very active and effective under Judge Robinson’s leadership.
- ***Juvenile Pattern Jury Instructions Committee*** – Past President Whiting shared that Tori Kricken is the Chair of this committee and they met for the first time and committee members were given specific assignments.
- ***Law School Liaison Committee*** – President-Elect Gee shared that there has not been any activity with this committee in the last four months. She was pleased that the Bar hosted the Solo, Small & Rural Law Forum at the law school again this year, as she thinks it is important to continue to have a presence there. She shared that she would contact Devon O’Connell, Chair of the Committee, to set up a meeting in the fall.

President P. Craig Silva adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m. on Friday, June 12, 2026.

Minutes Submitted by:

Sharon Wilkinson
Executive Director