

Wyoming State Bar Board of Officers & Commissioners Meeting

September 19, 2025

Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center

Laramie, Wyoming

In Attendance: James T. Whiting, President; P. Craig Silva, President-Elect; Alison O. Gee, Vice President; Kelly M. Neville, Treasurer; Christopher G. Humphrey, First Judicial District Commissioner; Dona Playton, Second Judicial District Commissioner; Jason Petri, Third Judicial District Commissioner; Jennifer L. Kirk, Fifth Judicial District Commissioner; Kyle A. Ferris, Sixth Judicial District Commissioner; Emily S. Madden, Seventh Judicial District Commissioner; Anne K. Wasserburger, Eighth Judicial District Commissioner; Clayton M. Melinkovich, Ninth Judicial District Commissioner; Sharon Wilkinson, Executive Director; and Mark W. Gifford, Bar Counsel

Absent: Anna M. Reeves Olson, Immediate Past President; Kevin K. Kessner, Fourth Judicial District Commissioner and Carl A. Edelman, Chair, Young Lawyer Section

Guest: Khale J. Lenhart, Chair, Legislative Developments Committee

President James T. Whiting called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. on Friday, September 19, 2025.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Vice President Alison Gee made a motion to approve the August 22, 2025, meeting minutes. President-Elect Craig Silva seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Senate Confirmation for Supreme Court Justices

Vice President Gee shared that she thought it would be helpful to have Khale Lenhart, Chair of the Legislative Developments Committee, join the meeting.

Khale Lenhart shared that, during this past legislative session, there was a bill introduced that would have done away with the Missouri Plan and moved to a system of electing judges. Fortunately, it was voted down in the Senate; however, that resulted in a push to review how Wyoming appoints its judges. He shared that election of judges was then brought up as an interim topic. After push-back from the legal community, the topic shifted from electing judges to Senate confirmation for judges, which was voted down in committee. Mr. Lenhart shared that he will not be surprised if this topic is brought up again as an individual bill for the 2026 session. He reminded the group, however, that since this next session is a budget session, such a bill would require 2/3 vote for submission.

Vice President Gee shared her concern that it might get introduced in the House of Representatives. Khale Lenhart shared that due to the make-up of the leadership in the House, hopefully, they could stop it. If leadership changes, then the risk is greater.

President-Elect Silva shared that he would like to see Board members go to their county clerks and find out who is going to be up for election in the Legislature. He thinks it is important to get that information out to lawyers and encourage them to participate in the process.

Vice President Gee shared her concern about the pending Supreme Court decision on the abortion case, as she fears the decision could reignite some criticism of the judiciary.

Vice President Gee reminded the Board that it has had discussions about sharing regular reports about legislative issues with the membership. Khale Lenhart shared that so much of the Legislature's work is truncated, so unless the Bar sends a weekly newsletter during the session, there is not much to report the other ten months of the year. Vice President Gee shared that she believes providing any information would help get lawyers involved and it could be beneficial.

Mark Gifford wondered about getting the practice section councils involved. Executive Director Sharon Wilkinson shared that she staffs those section councils and prior to each session, she encourages them to take a look at the bills and let her know if there is anything specific they would like Mr. Lenhart's committee monitor.

Vice President Gee asked Mr. Lenhart if he needed anything in particular from the Board. Mr. Lenhart asked for some guidance on how far the Board would like his committee to go—do we take a position on anything?

Commissioner Dona Playton shared her concern that it is a fringe group that is fighting the judicial selection process.

There was discussion about possible changes to judicial selection process and the importance of educating the public about the criteria to be a judge. Commissioner Clayton Melinkovich suggested reaching out to the lawyer members of the Judicial Nominating Commission to share what they are hearing from their constituents about the judicial selection process.

Approval of 2025-2027 Strategic Plan

President-Elect Silva made a motion to approve the 2025-2027 Strategic Plan. Vice President Gee seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Appointment of Bar Delegate to the ABA

Vice President Gee made a motion to appoint Kelly Neville to serve as the Bar Delegate to the ABA. Following the motion, there was discussion about the optics of choosing someone from the Board. There was also discussion amongst the Board about the other candidates who had expressed interest.

After much discussion, Commissioner Melinkovich seconded the motion. Commissioner Playton shared that Judge Bluemel's seat as the ABA State Delegate will be vacant in one year and he is not eligible to serve any longer. She and Executive Director Wilkinson explained the difference between the Bar Delegate and the State Delegate.

The motion carried unanimously.

Ratification of 2025/2026 Proposed Budget

Executive Director Wilkinson pointed out that in the current draft proposed budget, she is projecting \$160,000 in revenue for 2026 Annual Meeting registration. She also reminded the Board that in the last draft, the Bar was sitting at \$174,065 once August was reconciled. She checked with Cathy Duncil, Bookkeeper, this morning to see what the revenue was as of today and the Bar has generated \$231,700 in registration revenue to date. As a result of this, she recommended increasing the proposed revenue for next year's budget.

After discussion, Commissioner Melinkovich made a motion to adjust 2026 Annual Meeting registration revenue to \$190,000 and approve the proposed, adjusted budget. Commissioner Jennifer Kirk seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Fifth Judicial District Commissioner

Commissioner Kirk officially resigned as the Fifth Judicial District Commissioner now that she has been elected to serve as the Vice President of the Bar. Executive Director Wilkinson shared that this prompts the 30-day period by which the Board has to appoint a replacement to serve the remainder of Commissioner Kirk's term, which expires in September 2026. She shared that she would get a call for expressions of interest out to the active members of the Fifth Judicial District first thing Monday morning. She reminded the Board that she had already scheduled a Zoom meeting in October for the Board to make this appointment.

President James T. Whiting adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, September 19, 2025.

Minutes Submitted by:

Sharon Wilkinson
Executive Director