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Report on WSBA Board Handling of Harassment Claim Goes Public

Outside Investigator Says Washington State Bar Association Board Mishandled Sexual Harassment Allegations by Employee Against Board Member, Creating Hostile Work Environment

In what has been called a scathing report, an outside investigator says the board of governors of the Washington State Bar Association created a hostile work environment for staff by mishandling an employee's sexual harassment allegations against a board member. An employee (who has since left the bar) alleged that a member who had been elected to the board but had not yet been sworn in made sexualized statements to her at an off-site retreat. The investigator takes particular issue with the fact that the board appeared to disregard a previous investigation that found the employee's account more credible than the board member's, and that the board then elected the board member as bar treasurer. WSBA officials note that this incident and the outside investigation, which was ordered by the Washington Supreme Court, have led to clearer policies for handling complaints against board members. What do some current and former staff members say about their work environment and about how forthcoming the bar and the court have been with information about the findings of the outside investigation? Learn more at [ABA Journal](#).

Equity and COVID-19: Suggested Questions and Reading for Your Board

Many boards are committed to equity, both within the organization and in their interaction with the public. What does that commitment mean, in terms of COVID-19 and its disproportionate impact on communities of color? Jim Taylor, vice president of leadership initiatives and education at BoardSource, recommends that leaders look both out toward their broader community and within their own organizations to ensure that the board and chief staff executive apply an "equity lens" when making any decisions during this pandemic. In a [BoardSource blog post](#), Taylor offers a series of questions to help frame this discussion, as well as a reading list for further exploration.

Michigan Moves July Bar Exam Online, Minnesota Law Grads Seek Wisconsin Diploma Privilege

As summer approaches and COVID-19 doesn't seem to be going away, states and prospective test takers across the country are deciding what to do about the July 2020 bar exam. For example, last week, the Michigan Supreme Court announced that Michigan would follow suit with Indiana by conducting a one-day online bar exam. What went into making this decision, and what other jurisdictions are mulling a similar move? Find out at [Bloomberg Law](#). Meanwhile, three new University of Minnesota law grads have said that they can't wait any longer for Wisconsin, where they have jobs lined up, to decide whether or how to proceed with the July bar exam? Instead, they've petitioned for diploma privilege. Typically, this bar exam waiver is granted only to graduates of Wisconsin's two law schools. [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) has more details.

Amidst Funding Shortfalls, Legal Aid Providers See

Increased Demand Because of COVID-19

Even before many people felt the full economic impact of COVID-19, legal aid providers across the country were already struggling. For example, some legal aid providers estimate that they will lose millions of dollars in IOLTA funding because of an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve in March—and now, as more people become more financially unstable, requests for help are pouring in. [Big If True](#) speaks with seven legal aid attorneys across the country about how they're helping clients deal with illegal evictions, frozen bank accounts, and long waits for important hearings, all while facing an uncertain future themselves.

Once Law Firms Reopen Their Offices, How Will They Look and Feel Different?

As law firms in some states work toward a phased reopening of their physical offices, some real estate experts are saying those spaces may never be quite the same as they were before COVID-19. Law firms are now reconfiguring their spaces to accommodate new health guidelines, and one expert predicts that they may also reduce their footprints by 10 to 15 percent because some employees will continue to work from home. Another expert notes that many firms are renegotiating or renewing current leases to buy some time to assess what their needs will be once the pandemic comes to an end. [The American Lawyer](#) looks at how well the typical law office is already set up to meet social distancing requirements, what design changes may be needed, and what all of this may mean for law firm culture.



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