

STATE BAR OF MONTANA STRATEGIC PLAN 2011-2012

The purposes of the State Bar of Montana are to aid the courts in maintaining and improving the administration of justice; to foster and maintain and require on the part of those engaged in the practice of law high standards of integrity, learning, competence, public service, and conduct; to safeguard a forum for the discussion of and effective action concerning subjects pertaining to the practice of law, the science of jurisprudence and law reform, and relations of the bar to the public; to provide for the continuing legal education of members of the bar; and to insure that the responsibilities of the legal profession to the public are more effectively discharged.

Constitution of the State Bar of Montana, Article III, Purposes

MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Board of Trustees of the State Bar of Montana is to lead the legal profession and serve the public interest.”

The day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this plan lies with the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director. The plan itself will be reviewed and, as needed, amended annually at a retreat of the Board of Trustees.

PRIORITIES

- ▶ Increase access to justice and improve the administration of justice for all Montanans.
- ▶ Enhance attorney professionalism and the public perception of lawyers and the judiciary.
- ▶ Educate the public about the judiciary, the rule of law, and the administration of justice.
- ▶ Enhance Bench/Bar relations and support of the Judicial System.
- ▶ Increase member participation in the leadership of the Bar.
- ▶ Improve member services.
- ▶ Continue support of Lawyer Assistance Program.

Goals and Objectives

PRIORITY 1:

Increase access to justice and improve the administration of justice for all Montanans.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 1.1 Work to increase participation of attorneys and law firm support in pro bono service.
- 1.2 Work to maintain the profile of Equal Justice entities, and maintain funding for these entities.

- 1.3 Work to increase the amount of quality information and documents available to self-represented litigants and attorneys providing pro bono services.
- 1.4 Work to increase the number and capacity of local pro bono programs.
- 1.5 Encourage sections and committees to develop and incorporate programs that promote diversity and address unique legal problems of minorities and others who face barriers in the access to justice.

PRIORITY 2:

Enhance attorney professionalism and the public perception of lawyers and the judiciary.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 2.1 In collaboration with the Supreme Court, continue to fund and/or support the administration of the following Supreme Court Commissions and Task Forces:
 - Board of Bar Examiners,
 - Commission on Character and Fitness,
 - Commission on Unauthorized Practice,
 - Continuing Legal Education Commission,
 - Equal Justice Task Force,
 - Judicial Nominations Commission,
 - MPI Commission (Civil Jury Instructions), and
 - Any other Commission designated by the Supreme Court.
- 2.2 Continue to support the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC).
- 2.3 Support the Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection (LFCP) in administration of their Rules as well as the Trust Account Overdraft Rules. Support communications with the LFCP and the ODC.
- 2.4 Promote civility by and between attorneys.
- 2.5 Continue the plan to bring organized bar activities to law students and new lawyers. The plan includes but is not limited to strategies to:
 - increase the presence of the State Bar and its members at the UM Law School;
 - introduce newly admitted lawyers to the State Bar at the time of admission;
 - make State Bar professionalism activities available to law students and newly admitted lawyers in local communities and at reduced or no cost;
 - Develop a mentor program with participation by the LAP coordinator, student and faculty representatives from the law school, the State Bar staff and interested practicing lawyers.
- 2.6 Work to increase the diversity of the Bar membership.

PRIORITY 3:

Educate the public about the judiciary, the rule of law, and the administration of justice.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 3.1 Improve the public's understanding of the following: the judiciary, the importance of the rule of law in a civilized society; the individual's legal rights and responsibilities, and the working of the legal system; the problems encountered by the judiciary and attorneys in attempting to ensure access to legal services for the public; and the substantial contributions of attorneys to society in both legal and non-legal forums.

PRIORITY 4:

Enhance Bench/Bar relations and support of the Judicial System.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 4.1 Continue to foster communication between the Montana Supreme Court, the Bar, and the public.
- 4.2 Work with local bar associations in their areas and encourage local bar associations to regularly invite state and federal district court judges to their meetings to give them opportunities to speak and report at these meetings.

PRIORITY 5:

Increase member participation in the leadership of the Bar.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 5.1 Improve and enhance the membership's participation and interest in the goals and work of the State Bar, including communications with the membership, services to the membership, and education of the members.
- 5.2 Encourage the involvement of senior leaders of the communities in the local bars. Individual Trustees will attend at least one local bar association meeting per quarter and provide written reports at quarterly Board meetings on local bar activities. The Trustees will also make reports on State Bar quarterly meetings to local bar associations in their area. *The Montana Lawyer* will provide coverage of the Trustees' local bar reports and will also include a calendar of local bar activities.
- 5.3 Hold its quarterly April meeting at the Law School in Missoula. The Dean of the Law School or his/her designee will be encouraged to attend all meetings of the Board.
- 5.4 Communicate its agendas and minutes with the Bar members.
- 5.5 Promote participation in State Bar elections.
- 5.6 Work to increase the diversity of Bar leadership.

PRIORITY 6:

Improve member services.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 6.1 Serve as a liaison between Bar members and the Group Benefits Trustees regarding the State Bar health insurance plan.
- 6.2 Conduct a survey every five (5) years to assess issues and concerns of members.

PRIORITY 7:

Continue support of Lawyer Assistance Program.

The Board of Trustees will:

- 7.1 Educate members and law students about the program.
- 7.2 Continue to provide financial support to the Lawyers Assistance Program (LAP) in its efforts to assist members of the profession suffering from alcohol, drugs, stress, depression, and mental health problems. The Board will continue to support enhanced communications between the LAP, ODC, the Commission on Practice (COP) and creation of diversionary rules.