

**MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
OF THE
STATE BAR OF ARIZONA**

September 26, 2025

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Samuel J. Saks, President, Tempe; Doreen N. McPaul, President-Elect, Gilbert; Kelsi Lane, Vice President, Tempe; David J. Johns, Flagstaff; Amy P. Hernandez, Tucson; Cedric Dave, Public Member, Chandler; Cortez W. Smith, Public Member, Casa Grande; Heather Baker-Mushkatel, Sun City; Justice Kathryn King, Supreme Court Liaison, Phoenix; David B. Rosenbaum, Phoenix; Mignonne Hollis, Public Member, Sierra Vista; Russell Duerksen, Chino Valley; Louis S. Fidel, Tucson; J. Damon Ashcraft, Phoenix; Rebecca Baker, Phoenix; Jack Lunsford, Phoenix; Preston L. Pollock, Globe; Dean Stacy Leeds, Ex-Officio Member, ASU; Thomas Ryan, Chandler; Deputy Director, Jeff Schrade, Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts, Substitute for David K. Byers; Chloé R. Woods, Phoenix; Jena Decker-Xu, Phoenix; Jimmie Dee Smith, Yuma; Robert J. McWhirter, Phoenix; John W. Graham, Scottsdale; Rachel Romaniuk, YLD President, Chandler;

BOARD MEMBERS WITH EXCUSED ABSENCES: David K. Byers, At-Large Member, Scottsdale; Denis M. Fitzgibbons, Casa Grande; D. Christopher Russell, Secretary-Treasurer, Sierra Vista; Ted Schmidt, Tucson; Interim Dean Jason Kreag, Ex-Officio Member, UofA.

STAFF: Jessica Iennarella, Chief Financial Officer; Tim Eigo, Chief Communications Officer; Roberta Tepper, Chief Member Services Officer; Trish McCarty, HR Director; Lisa Panahi, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer; Maret Vessella, Chief Bar Counsel; Amy Rehm, Deputy Chief Bar Counsel; Noah Coakley, Chief of Staff & Director of Community Impact; Genna Barela, Manager of Board Operations; Deanna Commack, Executive Assistant; Maggie Duran, Legal Administrative Assistant; Chris Wyatt, IT Support Specialist; Jamie Nicole Stankewicz, Practice Management Attorney; Lori Palmer, Paralegal; Jackie Brokaw, Paralegal; Marlene Cartusciello, Investigator; Rick Palmatier Jr., Assistant General Counsel.

GUESTS: Whitney Harvey, Jessica Cotter, Melissa Ho, Daniel McDermott, Fabi M. Behnam.

1. Call to Order – Sam Saks

President Saks called the meeting to order at 8:58 a.m.

2. Call to the Public – Sam Saks

President Saks made a Call to the Public and hearing nothing, moved on to the next item on the agenda.

3. Recognition of Highest Bar Exam Scores – Sam Saks

President Saks gave recognition to:

- a) Daniel Harris McDermott, Highest Score, July 2024 Bar Exam
- b) Fabi Mansoor Behnam, Highest Score, February 2025 Bar Exam

Both members spoke briefly on their background and thanked the Board of Governors for their recognition.

4. Establishment of Young Lawyers Bridge Program Task Force

President Saks presented an overview of the program. He asked for volunteers.

5. Staff Recognition

In place of CEO England, Maret Vessella gave recognition to State Bar Staff.

- a) Employee of the Quarter – Jamie Nicole Stankewicz for organizing a team project to serve arbitrators in civil litigation matters.
- b) Team of the Quarter – Lori Palmer, Marlene Cartusciello, and Jackie Brokaw for working on a complex and large immigration matter.
- c) Roberta Tepper for receiving the Arizona Women Lawyers Association Award.
- d) Lisa Panahi, Chief Legal and Compliance Officer for 11 years of service to the State Bar of Arizona.

6. Wellness Program Update

Dean Stacy Leeds presented an update on the program and hiring process. She proposed a request to change the funding schedule to \$250,000.00 for the first year and \$150,000.00 for the second year from the \$200,000.00 per year pre-approved funding for the initial two years. No change in total ask amount. There were over 100 applicants for the CEO position and two individuals were selected to co-lead. This funding will be allotted to pay the salaries of the Co-Executives, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Clinical Officer. Dean Leeds provided information that Arizona State University will fund \$50,000.00 per year for a total of \$100,000.00 in the initial two years. The program will seek additional sponsors from legal firms, grants, and work with the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services to attain additional funding for future years. Discussions on the innerworkings of the program's services were had.

MOTION to change funding schedule to \$250,000.00 for the first year and \$150,000.00 for the second year from the \$200,000.00 per year funding set for two years to pay the salaries of two Co-Executives, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Clinical Officer made by Louis Fidel

Second by: J. Damon Ashcraft

Jimmie D. Smith opposed the motion.

No abstentions.

A majority of the voting members having voted in favor, the motion was carried.

Chloé R. Woods left the meeting at 9:16 a.m.

7. Consent Agenda – Sam Saks

President Saks asked if there were any matters that needed to be removed from the Consent Agenda and hearing nothing.

MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda made by Cedric Dave

Seconded by: Mignonne Hollis

Motion carried unanimously.

- a) Approval of April, May, June, & July 2025 Board Meeting Minutes
- b) Approval of Resignations in Good Standing
- c) Resignations in Lieu of Reinstatement
- d) Approval of Reinstatement of Member(s) suspended for Non-Compliance with Annual Membership Fees and/ or Trust Account Compliance (Rule 32(c)(10) and/ or Rule 43, Ariz. R. Sup. Ct.)

- e) Approval of Reinstatement of Member(s) suspended for Non-Compliance with MCLE Requirements (Rule 45, Ariz. R. Sup. Ct.)

8. Arizona Legal Access Fellowship – Law Student Public Internship Program Funding

Jessica Iennarella presented on funding requested for 2026 and amounts spent for 2025, including an update on the total reserve balance. Leah Won presented on student commitment.

MOTION to approve funding the fellowship program for 2026 at an increased amount of \$7,500.00 per fellow for up to 10 students made on behalf of the Finance & Audit Committee by staff liaison, Jessica Iennarella,

Second: Doreen N. McPaul

No abstentions.

Motion carried unanimously.

9. Finance and Audit Committee – Presentation of 2026 Budget Guidelines Memo

Jessica Iennarella presented the 2026 budget guidelines. Discussed changes to language and metrics in memo as compared to 2025's Budget Guidelines Memo.

MOTION to approve the 2026 Budget Guidelines Memo as presented made on behalf of the Finance & Audit Committee by staff liaison, Jessica Iennarella,

Seconded by: Doreen N. McPaul

No abstentions.

Motion carried unanimously.

Item out of order – Rick Palmatier Jr. introduced himself. He will be covering for Lisa Panahi.

11. Item taken out of order. Finance and Audit Committee – 2024 State Bar of Arizona & Client Protection Fund Audit Report

Jessica Iennarella presented the consolidated 2024 financial statements and related audit report.

Unmodified opinion received.

13. Item taken out of order. Correspondence/Reports

President Saks stated there was nothing new to report. He reminded the Board of upcoming events.

President Elect, Doreen N. McPaul noted to reference the nine (9) recommendations within the CLEAR report.

- a) National CLEAR Report with AI Summary
- b) Upcoming Events: Next Board meeting is on October 17th, 2025.
- c) Sections Events:
 - o Immigration Law Round Table; October 2nd, 2025
 - o Labor & Employment Annual Fall Seminar; October 9th – 10th, 2025
- d) SBA Sponsored/Partnership Ticketed Events – Limited Seating (RSVP Required)

Item not on agenda – Robert McWhirter provided a brief update on the background of the unapproved Master of Law Program. There being no further discussion, the meeting proceeded.

BREAK: The board took a short recess from 9:44 a.m. and the meeting resumed at 9:58 a.m.

10. Item taken out of order. Family Law Practice and Procedure Committee (FPPC) - Rules –

Proposed Comment

Jessica Cotter, Chair of the FPPC, proposed to edit the language and comment to Rule 91(h) and 92(c) of the Arizona Rules of the Family Law Procedure, to delete language in Rule 91(h)(ii) and Rule 92(c)(ii). The committee is in opposition of the Comment of the COFC due to the addition of a return hearing.

MOTION to support proposed comment made by Heather Baker-Mushkatel,

Seconded by: Tomas Ryan

No abstentions.

Motion carried unanimously.

12. Item taken out of order. ABA House of Delegates

Melissa Ho presented a summary of the meeting in Toronto, Canada from August 6th to August 12th, 2025. Outgoing President Bill Bay spoke of the challenges ABA has had over the last two years including a reduction in membership, financial constraints, and sponsorships due to politicalized climate. There are intermediate challenges to the rule of law. Some delegations have sent less representatives or had less attendance. Michelle Behnke is the incoming President of the ABA and will continue to work on these issues. George Chen is now serving a three-year term on the ABA Board of Governors in addition to the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession. Eileen Sullivan's term ends in 2026. Regions expanded. The ABA Constitutional Amendments were discussed. There are openings for Board of Governors.

David Rosenbaum opined on the events at the meeting and spoke on Chief Justice Ann A. Scott Timmer's participation as a speaker.

14. ADJOURNED at 10:11 a.m.