



# State Bar of Wisconsin Policy Positions



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

*Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.*



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## Introduction

The State Bar of Wisconsin is committed to the important role it plays in positively impacting the legislative process on issues of importance to the courts, the legal profession and the public. This book represents the continuing effort of the Board of Governors and the Government Relations Team to keep members apprised of positions taken by the State Bar of Wisconsin.

It is our hope that this book will provide our members with information on the guiding principles under which the State Bar of Wisconsin's Board of Governors directs the Government Relations Program to operate. Please feel free to contact any member of the Government Relations Team if you have questions.

Thank you,

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## Regulation of the Practice of Law

The Wisconsin Constitution clearly grants the Supreme Court administrative authority over all courts, as defined in Article VII. Through the strong constitutional authority, the Court has an inherent supervisory power over the practice of law.

In the 1974 majority opinion in *Herro, McAndrews & Porter v. Gerhart*, Justice Leo Hanley reiterated the Courts jurisdiction over the practice of law provided in re: *Integration of Bar* (1958):

“The practice of law in the broad sense, both in and out of the court, is such a necessary part of and is so inexorably connected with the exercise of the judicial power that this court should continue to exercise its supervisory control of the practice of the law.”

The Supreme Court defines a lawyer as a representative of clients, an officer of the legal system and a public citizen who has a special responsibility for the quality of justice. These professional ideals are set forth in the Preamble of Supreme Court Rule 20 titled, “A Lawyer’s Responsibility.” Through Supreme Court Rule the Court establishes the high professional standards and expectations for those practicing law in Wisconsin, encompassing an attorney’s role in client advocacy, service in the justice system and duties as a public citizen.

Concluding the Preamble the Court asserts that lawyers “play a vital role in the preservation of society.” It is in fulfilling this role that a strong relationship with the Court and the justice system is necessary.

The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the Court’s inherent supervisory power over the practice of law.

### Issues Related to the Regulation of the Practice of Law

- **Attorney-Client Privilege** - The State Bar of Wisconsin strongly supports the preservation of the attorney-client privilege and work product doctrine as essential to maintaining the confidential relationship between client and attorney required to encourage clients to discuss their legal matters fully and candidly with their counsel. [adopted February 2008; reaffirmed June 2016]
- **Attorney Fees** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the legal doctrine that attorney fees -whether fixed or contingent – are a matter of contract which can be enforced by the parties to the contract. All matters related to the regulation of attorney fees are addressed by the Wisconsin Supreme Court Rules and are exclusively subject to judicial branch review, control and enforcement. [adopted January 1988; revised June 2016]
- **Clinical Practicum** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes legislative attempts to impose clinical practicum or other curriculum mandates on students at the state’s law school. The State Bar is of the strong opinion that this is a decision to be made by the University of Wisconsin Law School, under the authority and action of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System and under compliance with guidelines for accreditation issued through the American Bar Association. [adopted December 2005; revised June 2016]
- **Court Fee Lapses** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes any effort that would require or allow the Wisconsin Supreme Court to lapse any fees collected through the State Bar for specific purposes of lawyer regulation to the state general purposes fund. Doing so would impose a tax specific to the regulation of the profession to be used as a back-door tax on the profession. [adopted May 2010; revised December 2019]
- **Federal Trade Commission “Red Flags” Rule** - The State Bar of Wisconsin urges the Federal Trade Commission and Congress to clarify that the Commission’s Red Flags Rule imposing requirement on creditors



relating to identity theft is not applicable to lawyers while they are providing legal services to clients. [adopted June 26, 2009; reaffirmed June 2016]

- **Judicial Requirement** - The State Bar supports the requirement that any judges, including municipal judges, be lawyers. [adopted June 2012; reaffirmed June 2016]
- **Real Estate Practice** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes efforts to expand the powers of real estate licensees to provide legal advice under Chapter 452 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Such expansion would be detrimental to the public in that it would allow brokers, who are not licensed to practice law by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, to provide legal advice, including enhanced abilities to negotiate and draft contracts and explain the consequences of actions taken during transactions. [adopted July 2005; revised June 2016]
- **Regulation of the Bar** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes transfer of the regulation of the Bar from the Supreme Court to other branches of government. This includes any legislative attempt to restrict the Court's authority over fees and assessments related to the State Bar or the regulation of the practice. It also includes administrative actions, state and federal, which attempt to target regulation or oversight of activities performed by attorneys. [adopted August 1984; revised December 2019]
- **Supervision of Paralegals** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the licensure of paralegals supervised by attorneys in accordance with Supreme Court Rule 20:5.3. [adopted June 2000; revised April 2020]
- **Tax on Legal Services** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes a professional tax on legal services. The State Bar of Wisconsin supports access to legal services as the essential operation of an ordered society and a tax on legal services would further increase legal fees and decrease low-income and moderate income individuals' access to justice. [adopted August 1984; revised June 1999; reaffirmed June 2016]
- **Tax Accounting Reform** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes governmental measures, which would require law firms and other personal service business that now compute taxable income on the cash receipts and disbursements method of accounting to convert to the accrual method of accounting. [adopted December 2013; reaffirmed December 2019]
- **Unauthorized Practice of Law** - The State Bar of Wisconsin believes that persons who engage in the unauthorized practice of law are harmful to consumers of services in Wisconsin. The Board of Governors supports any efforts to give meaningful enforcement to unauthorized practice of law as a means of redress for any damages caused. [adopted September 2010; revised June 2016]



## Delivery of Legal Services

SCR 10.02 (2) charges the State Bar of Wisconsin to improve the administration of justice, to create opportunities for legal education and “to promote the innovation and development and improvement of means to deliver legal services to the people of Wisconsin; to the end that the public responsibility of the legal profession may be more effectively discharged.”

The Supreme Court, in *In Matter of State Bar of Wisconsin*, 169 Wis.2d 21 (1992) better describes the purpose of the State Bar of Wisconsin:

“All lawyers have a special responsibility to society. That responsibility involves far more than merely representing a client. Lawyers are the guardians of the rule of law. The rule of law forms the very matrix of our society. Without the rule of law, there is chaos. Lawyers not only have a responsibility to their clients, they have an equal responsibility to the courts in which the rule of law is practiced, and to society as a whole to see that justice is done.” 169 Wis. 2d at 26 (1992) (Bablitch, J., concurring)

In March 2007, the Board of Governors adopted the recommendations of the “Bridging the Justice Gap: Wisconsin’s Unmet Legal Needs” which demonstrated the continuing need for additional resources to serve Wisconsin’s most vulnerable citizens. The State Bar of Wisconsin supports policies which encourage or enhance the quality and availability of legal services to the public. The Bar supports policies which enhance the public’s safety and protects the public’s privacy while involved with the legal system, to the extent that it is possible under the law and consistent with the fair and efficient administration of justice.

### Issues Related to the delivery of Legal Services

- **Broadband Access** - The State Bar supports efforts to expand broadband access, meeting the minimum criteria defined by the FCC\*, to all parts of WI, ensuring attorneys have the ability to effectively conduct business statewide, and WI residents have access to online research, legal forms, and self-help programs. The State Bar supports state and federal funding and grants for broadband statewide to ensure more uniform coverage across WI, as well as broadband expansion in any capital or infrastructure legislation. (\*Current FCC standards are 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed, the minimum speeds necessary to stream video or conduct normal business activities.) [adopted December 2020]
- **Civil Legal Services Funding/Legal Services Corporation Funding** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports funding to provide civil legal assistance by lawyers to low-income citizens and supports federal funding for the Legal Services Corporation to adequately provide low-income citizens access to the legal system. Further, the State Bar of Wisconsin supports participation of the private bar in state and federal civil legal services programs. The State Bar of Wisconsin recognizes that legal needs of low-income individuals go largely unmet and that access to legal services removes obstacles for low-income individuals. [adopted August 1984; revised January 1992, November 1998 and January 2015]

The State Bar of Wisconsin favors a legal aid system that does not interfere with poor persons’ full access to the courts or deny advocacy that is available to others in our society. [adopted June 2009]

- **Pro Bono Legal Services** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports removing legal impediments to government attorneys performing pro bono legal services. Attorneys employed by government have the same professional obligations to perform pro bono as do private practitioners but impediments in state statutes, administrative codes, local ordinances and local bargaining agreements may exist that make fulfilling this obligation difficult, if not impossible. [adopted June 1996]





## Administration of Justice

Article VII of the Wisconsin Constitution establishes the judicial branch of government and provides, “the Supreme Court shall have superintending and administrative authority over all courts.”

In *State v. Holmes*, 106 Wis. 2d 31 (1982) the court described its superintending and administrative authority:

“Thus the constitution grants the Supreme Court power to adopt measures necessary for the due administration of justice in the state, including assuring litigants a fair trial, and to protect the courts and the judicial system against any action that would unreasonably curtail the powers or materially impair the efficacy of the courts or judicial system. Such power, properly used, is essential to the maintenance of a strong and independent judiciary, a necessary component of our system of government.” 106 Wis. 2d at 44

Lawyers, as an essential component of the state’s justice system, have a responsibility to work for an efficient and effective justice system. Therefore, the State Bar supports efforts to ensure that judges are well-qualified, that the judicial system has available to it necessary resources and facilities, that litigants are assured fair trials and that the Supreme Court’s role as a superintending authority is respected.

### Issues Related to Administration of Justice

- **Administrative Law Hearings** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports independent agencies for state hearing examiners and federal administrative law judges. Public perception of fairness of administrative law hearings could be impacted by suspicions that agency officials may exert improper influence on the decisions of agency personnel that conduct the hearings. The transfer of state hearing examiners and federal administrative law judges to separate agencies would bolster public confidence in the independence of their decisions. [adopted August 1984]
- **Civic Education** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports legislation for civic instruction in schools as a means of increasing awareness and understanding of civic responsibilities and freedom. [adopted September 2001; revised January 2015]
- **Diversity** - The State Bar of Wisconsin is an inclusive organization committed to recognizing, respecting, promoting and encouraging diversity among its leadership, its membership and the entire legal community. We encourage all local and specialty bars to promote diversity and inclusion in their membership and leadership. We encourage legal employers and law firms to promote diversity and inclusion within their workplaces to mirror the world in which we practice. [adopted April 2017]
- **Exonerate Compensation** - For those whom the justice system has failed through wrongful convictions and imprisonment, the State of Wisconsin must ensure that exonerates are appropriately compensated for the injustice they suffered and the years of freedom they lost. This includes financial compensation both immediate and long-term along with access to support services to assist with job training, and educational, health and legal services after an innocent person’s release. [adopted June 2016]
- **Expungement** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the broad remedial purpose of expungement. The Supreme Court has historically assumed the power to regulate its records by the promulgation of Supreme Court Rules, including Chapter 72 (“Retention and Maintenance of Records”). Further, the State Bar supports the inherent authority of Wisconsin courts to manage and control their own files and records and to determine when they ought to be made public. The State Bar supports the authority of the Supreme Court to provide clear guidance to lower courts as to the scope of their authority to expunge court records and the development of a methodology to clearly advise trial level court judges, defense lawyers and prosecutors, that authority exists to expunge court records for individuals for whom charges were dismissed or not proven, or when the retention period has concluded. The State Bar maintains that authority for expungement, beyond that prescribed by statute, also rests with the equitable authority of the court consistent with WIS. CONST., Art. I, § 9, stating: *Every person is entitled to a certain remedy in the laws for all injuries, or wrongs which he may*



*receive in his person, property, or character; he ought obtain justice freely, and without being obligated to purchase it, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay, conformably with the laws.*

However, the State Bar supports legislative efforts to expand the ability of certain persons to expunge court records. The State Bar finds compelling studies that demonstrate a mere contact with the criminal justice system can have a significant detrimental stigma on persons seeking employment or housing. [adopted January 2014]

- **Immigration** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes any state efforts to regulate actions that conflict with Article VI, Clause 2 of the United States Constitution whenever the federal government is acting in pursuit of its constitutionally authorized powers. Consequently, the State Bar opposes any state efforts related to immigration that encourage a conflict to arise between federal law and either the state constitution or state law. [adopted September 2011]
- **Independent Judiciary** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the independence of our judiciary. The rule of law must not be influenced by public opinion and the right to be judged by an independent judge or jury must be protected. [adopted July 2005; revised January 2015]
- **Judicial Authority/Co-Equal Branch** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports Article VII of the Wisconsin Constitution establishing the judicial branch of government and provides, “the Supreme Court shall have superintending and administrative authority over all courts.” The Judicial System is a co-equal branch of government and the State Bar opposes efforts that would usurp the superintending authority of the Court. [adopted April 2015]
- **Juror Information** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports parties’ and counsel’s access to personal juror identifying information balanced by reasonable and fair restrictions on the type of information jurors are required to provide to the clerks of courts as part of the juror registration process. [adopted January 1999]
- **Open Records** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports court files as open records subject to legitimate privacy concerns, proprietary information, and trade secrets or as otherwise protected by law. [adopted June 1991; revised January 2015]
- **Supreme Court Campaigns** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports public financing for Supreme Court campaigns from state general purpose revenue to help maintain the integrity and independence of Wisconsin’s courts, where even the perception of bias destroys public trust and confidence in the justice system. [adopted May 2001]
- **Supreme Court Election** - To enhance the confidence of the people in the independence and integrity of Wisconsin’s highest court, the State Bar of Wisconsin recommends the adoption of a constitutional amendment that would change the term of office for Supreme Court justices to a single elected 16-year term. [adopted September 2013]
- **Violence & the Justice System** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports continued resources to protect our courts, court personnel and individuals that access the courts. [adopted January 2015]



## Funding of the Justice System

Wisconsin courts have constitutional functions and obligations that require funding at a level sufficient to meet those responsibilities. Since the legislature has the constitutional power to tax (*LaCrosse Foundation v. Town of Washington*, 182 Wis. 2d 490, 494 (Ct. App. 1994)) it has the ultimate power over funding. Thus, the judiciary is dependent on the other branches of government, especially the legislature, to provide adequate funding to properly perform its constitutional duties.

The State Bar of Wisconsin believes that adequate funding is of critical importance to provide a system of justice which is fairly administered and impartial to all people, regardless of financial circumstance.

### Issues Related to Funding of the Justice System

- **Circuit Court Branches** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports increases in Circuit Court branches, after an analysis of caseload standards, that the Circuit Court needs a new branch. [adopted November 1994; revised December 2019]
- **Court Operations** - The State Bar of Wisconsin fundamentally believes the Judicial Branch of government should be funded through sum-sufficient general purpose revenue. The Bar supports funding for all areas of court operations and for all personnel related to court operations such as: law libraries, deputy and assistant clerks of court, secretaries, law clerks and court commissioners. Adequate funding is of critical importance to provide a system of justice which is fairly administered and impartial to all people. The State Bar also believes increases in filing fees make access to justice very difficult. In any case, any increase in filing fees must go to support the justice system. [adopted February 2013; revised December 2019]
- **Compensation for State Attorneys** - The State Bar supports compensation, including benefit packages that are adequate to attract and retain experienced and qualified attorneys employed by the State of Wisconsin. [adopted April 2013]
- **Court Interpreters** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the funding of court interpreters. The goal is to maintain an education program for court interpreters so that they are sufficiently able to understand court procedures, terms and processes, and to be able to interpret that for individuals with a variety of language barriers. [revised February 2013]
- **Department of Justice Funding** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports adequate funding for the Wisconsin Department of Justice to ensure that it can maintain its responsibilities to support the legal community and the justice system in order to ensure the protection of Wisconsin's citizens. [adopted June 2009; reaffirmed February 2013]
- **Judicial Compensation** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports judicial compensation, including benefit packages, for both state and federal courts which are adequate to attract and retain judges capable of administering justice fairly and efficiently. The Judicial Branch is a co-equal branch of government and should have the ability through an independent Judicial Compensation Commission to set judicial salaries at an equitable level that properly compensates the work of the judiciary. [adopted February 2013]
- **Judicial Council** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the funding of the Judicial Council. The 21-member statutory body, studies and makes recommendations relating to: (1) court pleading, practice and procedure and (2) organization, jurisdiction and methods of administration and operation of Wisconsin courts. In order to carry out these statutory responsibilities the Judicial Council needs state support to assist these important functions to advance our judicial system. [adopted April 2019]
- **Law School Debt** - Despite their deep commitment to ensure access to justice for all citizens, many find that the rising cost of a legal education forces them to forego any form of public service or to practice in fields



or settings that result in substantially lower loan repayment opportunities. The State Bar of Wisconsin supports legislative efforts to reduce the cost of a legal education and to provide loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP) where appropriate. [adopted April 2015]

- **Prosecutor Board** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the creation of an independent prosecutor board and creation of the State Prosecutors Office. The independent board will serve to protect the interests and funding for elected District Attorneys and assistant district attorneys in Wisconsin. [adopted June 2017]



## Criminal Practice and Procedure

A basic underpinning of a quality criminal justice system is access to effective representation for both the public and the defendant. No one is served unless justice is served.

The right of indigent defendants to counsel has been upheld by both the United States Supreme Court (*Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 355, 334, 9 L.Ed. 2d 799, 83 S.Ct. 792 (1963)) and the Wisconsin Supreme Court (*Carpenter and Another v. County of Dane*, 9 Wis. 249 (1858)). In fact, Wisconsin has recognized the right for over 140 years. The court reasoned that the right enumerated in Article 1, Section 7 of the Wisconsin Constitution — to be heard by counsel, to demand the nature and cause of the accusation, and to meet witnesses face to face — would be a cruel mirage in the absence of legal counsel.

Case law at both the federal and state level has set the standard for effective assistance of counsel as providing the client with zealous, competent, and independent representation. The State of Wisconsin was among the first in the country to recognize the necessity of compensating attorneys who represent indigents in criminal proceedings in order to guarantee the defendant fully adequate representation (*State v. Beals*, 52 Wis. 2d 599, 612 (1971)).

For the prosecution, the district attorney is a constitutional officer (Article VI, sec. 4(1) of the Wisconsin Constitution). Wisconsin statute section 978.05 (1) establishes the district attorney shall prosecute all criminal actions before any court within his or her county.

The courts further define the role of the prosecution in *Application of Bentine*, 181 Wis. 579, 587, 196 N.W. 213 (1923): “A public prosecutor is a quasi-judicial officer, retained by the public for the prosecution of persons accused of crime, in the exercise of a sound discretion to distinguish between the guilty and the innocent, between the certainly and the doubtfully guilty.”

The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the principle that both the public and the defense are entitled to effective representation to assure that justice is served.

### Issues Related to Criminal Practice and Procedure

- **Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports returning original jurisdiction of 17-year-old juveniles to the juvenile justice system and not the adult criminal justice system. The adult criminal justice system is neither adequately equipped nor designed to handle juveniles in the adult system. The juvenile system has specific programming designed to address issues which are unique to our state’s youth. The State Bar is not advocating the elimination of the ability of the court to try truly dangerous and mature 17-year-olds in adult court when appropriate or to change the existing original jurisdiction in adult court for juveniles who have committed a homicide or certain other offenses or the ability to waive a juvenile into adult court. [adopted March 2007; revised February 2013]
- **Bail Reform** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports pretrial release and detention laws that consider the safety of the community. The State Bar of Wisconsin also supports reforming bail and pretrial release and detention laws so as to restrict the use of cash bail and supports policies that reduce disparities based on poverty and race. [adopted June 2018; revised February 2023]
- **Criminal Penalty Legislation** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports fiscal estimates on all legislation creating or enhancing penalties providing for prison or jail incarcerations. A full discussion of legislation is impossible without all relevant information including the fiscal impact criminal penalty legislation has on the administration of justice and the justice system. [adopted October 1993; reaffirmed February 2013]
- **Criminal Procedure Code** - In accordance with purpose set forth in SCR 10.02, the State Bar of Wisconsin supports the work of the Wisconsin Judicial Council to revise and update the criminal procedure code. The Council’s rationale for updating the criminal procedure code is that a properly codified criminal procedure code may improve the quality of legal practice in this state. [adopted January 2015]



- **Death Penalty** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes reinstatement of the death penalty in Wisconsin. [adopted April 1995 and revised February 2013]
- **Driver's License Suspensions, Warrants, or Incarceration for Debt Collection** - The State Bar supports efforts to end the practice of allowing courts to order driver's license suspensions, warrants, or incarceration for the purpose of collecting debt for tickets, forfeitures, court costs, or criminal fines. Courts in Wisconsin have a wide range of other options for resolving nonpayment of debt. Judges can and should provide statutory options such as community service, affordable payment arrangements, debt modification, and permanent stays. Recognizing the unjust, compounding harms created by these debt collection mechanisms, Wisconsin must stop using driver's license suspensions, warrants, or incarceration to collect debt for tickets, forfeitures, court costs, or criminal fines. [adopted January 2021]
- **Early Discharge from Supervision** - The State Bar supports establishing a process by which a person on parole release or extended supervision can obtain an early discharge from supervision. [adopted June 2018]
- **Eligibility for Appointed Counsel** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports use of federal poverty guidelines as minimum financial criteria for determination of eligibility to receive constitutionally mandated appointment of counsel and, in determining an individual's eligibility for appointed counsel, the cost of counsel should accurately reflect the actual cost of hiring local counsel. [adopted April 1996; reaffirmed February 2013]
- **Extraordinary Health Release** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports amending the extraordinary health condition (EHC) release statute, Wis. Stat. § 302.113(9g), so as to facilitate the prompt release from prison of inmates who suffer from an EHC and who no longer pose a threat to public safety. [adopted June 2018]
- **Geriatric Release** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports amending the geriatric release statute, Wis. Stat. § 302.113(9g), so as to make the statutory procedures and standards for geriatric release available to inmates with indeterminate (i.e., pre-Truth-in-Sentencing) sentences. [adopted June 2018]
- **Habeas Corpus** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the right of habeas corpus. The State Bar affirms that the right of habeas corpus is "the fundamental instrument for safeguarding individual freedom against arbitrary and lawless state action." *Harris v. Nelson*, 394 U.S. 286, 290-91 (1969). [adopted December 2005 and revised April 2013]
- **Juvenile Shackling** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports a presumption that juveniles not be shackled during court proceedings. Judges would retain authority to order shackling in cases deemed necessary. The State Bar believes the practice impedes the attorney-client relationship, chills juveniles' constitutional right to due process, runs counter to the presumption of innocence, and draws into question the rehabilitative ideals of the juvenile court. [adopted September 2019]
- **Private Bar Compensation** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports private practice lawyers' compensation for assigned counsel appointments at a rate that fairly compensates lawyers for their time, travel and any other costs associated with providing quality representation to their clients. Rates of compensation should be at least as much as those set by the Wisconsin Supreme Court for court-appointed attorneys. A rate of compensation less than that set by the Wisconsin Supreme Court for court appointed attorneys does not safeguard the constitutional rights of individuals accused of committing a crime. The State can guarantee constitutional safeguards by providing fair and timely reimbursements to private bar attorneys to ensure a more efficient and effective criminal justice system. [adopted April 2013]
- **Profiling and Collection of Demographic Data** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes discrimination of any form in the justice system, including profiling on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. The State Bar supports the collection and dissemination of demographic data on persons interacting with law enforcement in the justice system by appropriate



agencies, and encourages the consideration of such data by decision makers in the system. (See also Law Enforcement Reform Policy) [adopted December 2019; revised April 2021]

- **Prosecutor Funding and Caseload Standards** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports funding for all state prosecutors. The State Bar also supports compensation, including benefit packages that are adequate to attract and retain prosecutors that are capable of ensuring effective representation of the public in criminal cases. The State of Wisconsin has a constitutional obligation to fund all parts the criminal justice system. By ensuring that District Attorney Offices around the state are adequately staffed and funded based on reasonable caseload standards; we are creating a more efficient and effective criminal justice system. [adopted January 1999; revised February 2010 and April 2013]
- **Right to Counsel** - The State Bar supports the right of criminal defendants to effective assistance of counsel. Case law at both the federal and state level have set the standard for effective assistance of counsel as providing the client with zealous, competent and independent representation. The State Bar supports the principle that all criminal defendants are entitled to effective representation to assure that justice is served. [adopted December 2009; revised February 2013]
- **State Public Defender Funding and Caseload Standards** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports compensation, including benefit packages that are adequate to attract and retain public defenders to ensure that ethical, effective representation is provided to each client. The State Bar of Wisconsin also supports caseload standards for individual Public Defender staff attorneys which reasonably allow attorneys time to provide ethical, effective representation to each client, which are based upon objective standards recognized by the American Bar Association. The integrity of the justice system requires that litigants be fairly and effectively represented regardless of economic resources. Overworked Public Defenders are forced by too-high caseloads to cut corners in their representation of their clients. [adopted November 1990; revised April 2013]
- **Substitution of Judges** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes restrictions on the substitution of judges. Judges are substituted to insure a fair trial. Public confidence in the judicial system rests on the public's belief that they will receive a fair trial before an impartial judge. If a person perceives, for whatever reason, that the judge may be less than fair, public confidence will be eroded. [adopted April 1989; reaffirmed February 2013]



## Civil Practice and Procedure

Article I, §9 of the Wisconsin Constitution states that “every person is entitled to a certain remedy in the laws for all injuries, or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character; he ought to obtain justice freely, and without being obliged to purchase it, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay, conformably to the laws.” Although §9 may not give individuals the exact remedy they may be seeking, it does provide them with their “day in court” and establishes the constitutional underpinning to the right of redress.

The Wisconsin Constitution specifically identifies the need for redress for “all injuries or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character,” indicating the importance of this right even as our state was founded over 150 years ago.

Its very inclusion as a separate and distinct section of the Wisconsin Constitution underscores its importance to the citizens of this state. Accordingly, the State of Wisconsin should seek to preserve at the state level, the constitutional right of redress for all injuries or wrongs.

The Wisconsin Constitution’s directive to provide individuals an avenue to obtain justice “freely” and “completely” and “without denial” when they have been wronged cannot be overemphasized. The Constitution acknowledges the role of statutory laws in setting the boundaries of §9. Any limitation of these constitutional rights should be strictly limited so as to ensure that justice is “completely” rendered.

The overarching principal in §9 is best served in today’s legal system by a court of law and the gradual evolution of legal principals by a case by case method of legal rule making and not by statutory fiat. Predetermined legislative limits and special exceptions to the gradual development of the common law should be rare. Determining each case on its own merits rather than through a prescribed formula or directive is the best means to protect citizens’ constitutional rights to remedy for all injuries and wrongs. The historic position of the State Bar of Wisconsin is that the judicial branch of government is a coequal branch. The Court’s historic role in the development of remedies for injuries and wrongs should be preserved and protected from the pressures of special interests, lobbyists, or those who seek to influence the development of law for their short-sighted benefit. Remedies are best defined by the careful, thoughtful application of historical traditions of the common law on a case by case basis.

Finally, to ensure justice through our civil courts, those courts must operate with efficiency and effectiveness. Remedies must be sought to correct civil procedures that are ineffective, inefficient, arbitrary, or unduly delay in the rendering of justice.

### Issues Related to Civil Practice and Procedure

- **Auto Policy Limits** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the ability of insureds to stack automobile policy limits. Anti-stacking laws work against the consumer by limiting coverage while providing no visible reduction in premiums. [adopted September 1993]
- **Collateral Source Rule** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the collateral source rule which bars reduction of awards by payments from collateral sources that do not have subrogation rights. The fact that payments are received from a collateral source is irrelevant in the determination of negligence or the amount of damages. The responsibility of a tort-feasor to pay damages caused should not be lessened by the victim’s prudence in planning for contingencies. [adopted January 1988]
- **Consolidation of Mass Litigation** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports consolidation of multi-state mass tort litigation and creating a special federal jurisdiction based on minimal diversity to consolidate major related multi-party, multi-forum litigation. [adopted January 1990]
- **Consumer Protection and Repossessions** - The State Bar opposes attempts to weaken protections for consumers in the judicial system provided by the Wisconsin Consumer Act concerning repossession. [adopted January 2021]





- **Ghostwriting** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports policies which encourage or enhance the quality and availability of legal services to the public. This includes the use of “ghostwriting” that provides for the vital participation of legal counsel, without disclosure of the attorney’s name or bar number, in assisting pro se individuals in preparing documents for use within the legal system. This limited legal assistance can benefit parties and the court by focusing the legal issues and more clearly stating the facts and therefore promoting the effective administration of justice. Lawyers, as an essential component of the state’s justice system, have a responsibility to work for an efficient and effective justice system. [adopted December 2019]
- **Medical Malpractice: Loss of Companionship** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports legislation which would permit a parent to recover for loss of society and companionship of an adult child. [adopted September 2001]
- **No-fault Auto Insurance** - The State Bar of Wisconsin opposes no-fault automobile insurance. No-fault automobile insurance policies include unconstitutional restrictions on the right to recover damages. Furthermore, federal preemption in this area is an undesirable entry of the federal government into a field of tort law that has traditionally fallen within the province of the state. [adopted August 1984]
- **Product Liability** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports the development of product liability law at the state level rather than the federal level. The field of tort law has traditionally remained within the exclusive province of the states and should remain that way. [adopted August 1984]
- **Tax Fairness** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports legislation that allows noneconomic damage awards for unlawful discrimination, including employment discrimination, civil rights, and whistleblowers, to receive the same federal tax treatment as noneconomic damage awards for personal injury. Specifically the tax code should exclude noneconomic damages for unlawful discrimination from gross income, permit income averaging for back pay and front pay amounts received in a lump sum, and exempt any tax benefit resulting from income averaging from the alternative minimum tax. This tax treatment will both reduce costs to litigators and increase recovery for those who are the victims of this discrimination. [adopted December 2013]
- **Unpublished Decisions** - The State Bar of Wisconsin supports citation of all unpublished Court of Appeals opinions, decisions, and orders. [adopted April 1989; revised December 2019]



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