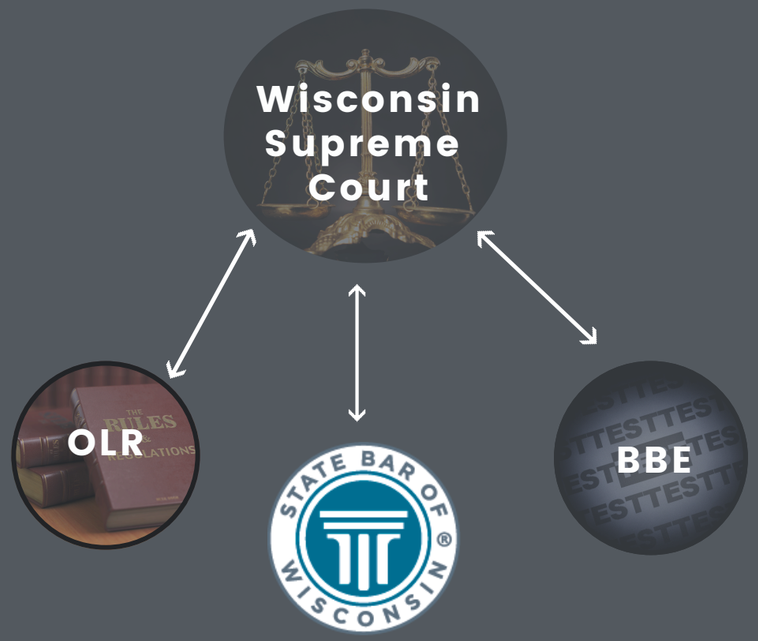
STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

Understanding the Legal Landscape

There are three entities created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, each with different functions.



- OLR: The Office of Lawyer Regulation investigates lawyer misconduct. The Supreme Court, if appropriate, issues fines/penalties.
- BBE: The Board of Bar Examiners tests the skills, character, and fitness of lawyers seeking to enter the practice. Out of state lawyers must pass the bar exam or have actively practiced elsewhere to receive a law license.
- SBW: The State Bar of Wisconsin supports all attorneys licensed to practice by delivering valued professional services, promoting access to justice, and pursuing professional satisfaction.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP 2025–2026

Stephen Sawyer
President-elect

Dan D. Gartzke
President

Ryan J. Billings
Immediate Past-President

Every member of the State Bar of Wisconsin is represented by a 53-member board of Governors including in-state and out-of-state lawyers

Links to Policy Priorities: wisbar.org

01. Criminal Justice Reform
- Includes expungement reform, bail reform, juvenile jurisdiction, and other issues
- Criminal Justice Reform Fact Sheet

02. Civil Legal Aid
- Civil Legal Aid Funding Fact Sheet

03. Supporting the Legal Profession
- Includes student debt, rural attorney shortage, and other issues.
- Supporting the Legal Profession Fact Sheet

The State Bar has 26 sections that represent various areas of law. 15 of them lobby. Section lobbying positions are independent from those of the Board of Governors. When mentioning a position taken by a section,, use the specific section name, like "The Family Law Section of the State Bar of Wisconsin," instead of just "The State Bar of Wisconsin." Learn about lobbying sections.

SERVING THE PUBLIC, THE COURTS, AND OUR MEMBERS

The State Bar serves the public by supporting access to justice through free legal assistance, estate planning, lawyer referrals, small business legal help, and public education.

The State Bar advocates for a stronger justice system and provides administrative support to the Wisconsin Court system. It also publishes official notices, disciplinary decisions, and court digests, while maintaining records for over 25,000 attorneys.

The State Bar supports its members with ethics counsel, small business advice, advanced continuing legal education, and well-being consultations.

Getting it Right

Media stories referencing the State Bar of Wisconsin should follow the name guidelines below:

Correct: The State Bar of Wisconsin
Acceptable: The State Bar (2nd reference)

Incorrect: Wisconsin Bar
Incorrect: Wisconsin Bar Association
Incorrect: Wisconsin State Bar Association
Incorrect: State Bar Association
Incorrect: The Bar

Looking For Stories/Legal Expert?

Check out wislawnow.com and our “Know Your Legal Rights” stories on wnanews.com for breaking story ideas.

Need a legal expert for a story? Contact Mike Wiltse, PR Manager, mwiltse@wisbar.org, 608-250-6025