

State Bar Will Hold Special Election

The State Bar of Wisconsin must hold a special election in October to fill a vacant president-elect seat. The special election opens by electronic ballot Oct. 10, and closes Oct. 25.

BY JOE FORWARD

Fifty-five State Bar of Wisconsin Board of Governors members have become judges. In some cases, the board member resigned from the board to become a judge (judges cannot serve as board members). This is precisely what happened in Jane Bucher's case.

Bucher won the election to become the State Bar's president-elect, starting her term on July 1, 2023. She served in that role until April 2024, resigning after Gov. Tony Evers appointed her to the Green County Circuit Court bench. To fill out Bucher's term as State Bar president-elect, the Board of Governors appointed Ryan Billings, who won the election in April 2024 to become president-elect (starting July 1, 2024).

Appointing Billings to serve out Bucher's term allowed him to become president one year early (starting July 1, 2024), because every president must be elected by the membership.

The membership elected Billings. He won't have a year to warm up as president-elect, but Billings knows the State Bar, having served two terms on the State Bar's Board of Governors.

These circumstances now leave the State Bar with a vacancy at the president-elect position. Thus, the State Bar must hold a special election to fill the seat.

The special election will take place by electronic ballot, opening Oct. 10 and closing Oct. 25. The winner will take office immediately and become president on July 1, 2025.

For more information about the president-elect candidates, go to wisbar.org/Elections, or read their election campaign flyers on pages 37 and 38.

The State Bar president-elect (and ultimately, president) plays a crucial role in helping the State Bar set its strategic goals and priorities and move the legal profession forward. The State Bar exists to help lawyers, the legal profession, the courts, and the public.

The State Bar does this through direct member services, such as the Ethics Counsel program, the WisLAP program, and the Law Office Management Assistance program (also known as Practice411). Through advocacy, leadership programming, continuing legal education, legal publications, and pro bono and other programs, often assisted by section, division, and committee volunteers, the State Bar is a partner in the legal community.

For instance, this was the inaugural summer for the State Bar's Rural Clerkship program, which connects law students with summer clerkships in rural areas of the state. The program helps law students gain practical experience and, it is hoped, helps rural communities attract more lawyers as Wisconsin faces an attorney shortage.

The effort was led by Wausau-based Dean Dietrich, who served as State Bar president in the last term (2023-24) and was carefully listening to conversations about the lawyer shortage. Dietrich also helped lead the State Bar's efforts to increase pay for prosecutors and public defenders, amid vacancies, which became a reality in the state budget last year.

Reportedly, prosecutor and public defender vacancies are down following the approved raises.

In the same way, the State Bar's officers and board members – who you elect to represent you – are listening to your concerns and are crucial in helping the State Bar develop strategies to address them. So please cast your vote for your next president-elect. **WL**

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Vote in October: Look for your Email Ballot

To ensure you receive your State Bar election ballot, add noreply@directvote.net as an approved sender in your inbox before Oct. 10. This prevents the ballot from being identified as spam.

Please note: If you have placed any holds on emails from the State Bar, you may not receive an electronic ballot. Contact Customer Service at (800) 444-9404 to verify that your account is set up to receive your email ballot.

State Bar members with no email address on file will receive paper ballots. Paper ballots will be mailed Oct. 9, 2024, with instructions. **WL**