

YOUNG LAWYERS

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WHAT THE STATE BAR CAN DO FOR YOU

Why being a member of the West Virginia State Bar is more than paying dues

A law student's dream is passing the Bar exam and finally becoming a member of a prestigious state bar. That will confirm it — you did it! But once you pass the exam, what's next? Luckily for young lawyers in West Virginia, you are now a member of one of the oldest agencies in the state that offers abundant resources to make your transition into the practice of law a smooth one.

Following my Bar admission, I wrongly assumed that the State Bar only existed to regulate the practice of law in West Virginia. I had no idea that it would quickly become one of my best resources as a young attorney. Like myself, many young lawyers' first introduction to the State Bar is related to the dreaded Bar exam. Although necessary, admittedly, this is not the best first impression. However, what the West Virginia State Bar

offers to young lawyers reaches far beyond administering the Bar exam.

I have compiled what I believe to be the most useful services the West Virginia State Bar offers for young lawyers beginning practice in our state.

Free Education Opportunities

As a new attorney, your knowledge and experience are limited, and your pockets might be shallow. Thankfully, the State Bar offers numerous free in-person and virtual CLE and training programs. You can find these on the State Bar website or in your email in the weekly Bar Blasts. This is an easy and helpful way to get your CLE credits without breaking the bank or having to travel a long distance.

Judicial & Lawyer Assistance Program

Being a lawyer is hard. (I can attest

to that.) As attorneys, sometimes it's hard to admit when we need to ask for help. The West Virginia Judicial & Lawyer Assistance Program (JLAP) is a free and CONFIDENTIAL assistance program that provides consultations, health care referrals, intervention, monitoring and peer support for lawyers, judges, applicants and law students who might be struggling with substance abuse, stress, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideations or any other mental/physical/emotional health issues that might arise. Please do not hesitate to reach out to JLAP when or if you find yourself in a compromising position. No problem is too big or too small.

Committees

Newly admitted lawyers learn fast that one of the most important parts of law practice is networking. Building good professional

relationships is invaluable in the practice of law. The West Virginia State Bar has numerous committees and over 20 practice-specific committees you can join. This not only gets you involved and networking but also provides a way for you to learn more about your practice area, while working alongside professionals you will be practicing with in the future.

Photo ID Cards

Do you have yours yet? This is a small but great perk of being a member of the State Bar! The State Bar provides members with official photo identification cards through the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles, evidencing your Bar license and membership in the state of West Virginia. I use my State Bar ID card every time I go to the federal courthouse. It's a quick and easy way to confirm you are a practicing attorney in the state of West Virginia.

Legal Research

Whether you're in the process of hanging your own shingle, doing pro bono work or just finding yourself in a bind needing legal research fast, the State Bar provides its members with free access to the Fastcase legal research platform. As young attorneys, the learning curve is steep. You will find yourself doing a lot of research your first year, and this is a simple and free way to get access to caselaw.

Use of State Bar Offices and Facilities

Did you know that you can actually reserve and use the facilities at the State Bar Center located in Charleston? The West Virginia State Bar Center is beautifully decorated and fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology designed for attorneys to conduct business. You can hold in-person and virtual meetings, trainings, depositions, mediations and more. There are multiple rooms and offices at your disposal at the State Bar Center. Why meet at a coffee shop or a small courthouse conference room when the State Bar offers its facilities for free? Making a reservation is simple and can be made on the State Bar website.

Member Directory

Although it is a simple concept, I find this resource to be one of the most useful. Need a colleague's email? Stuck in traffic on your way to a hearing without opposing counsel's phone number? The member directory is extremely helpful and convenient for State Bar members. As long as you know the name of the State Bar member you are looking for, you can find their email address and phone number in a flash.

The Young Lawyer Section

This section of the State Bar was created to assist new lawyers in making the transition between law school and the practice of law through CLEs, service projects, networking and leadership opportunities. The YLS does numerous service and volunteer projects throughout the year that you can be a part of. All State Bar members who either (1) have been admitted to practice for 10 years or less or (2) are 35 years of age or under are automatically members of the Young Lawyer Section. Watch your email for Bar Blasts from the State Bar to see announcements and upcoming events from the YLS.

Annual and Regional Meetings

Attend meetings! For me, I have found networking to be invaluable to my personal and professional development. In fact, had it not been for networking, I would not have the current job that I do. I graduated from an out-of-state law school, and I am not a Charleston native. Therefore, when I started working at a firm immediately following graduation, I didn't know any other local attorneys. I decided to hit the ground running to make professional connections. This began with attending my first State Bar Annual Meeting at the Greenbrier in 2016. I immediately felt fully immersed in the West Virginia State Bar, and I haven't missed an Annual Meeting since.

Although this is just the tip of the iceberg as it relates to what the West Virginia State Bar offers, I hope it illustrates that the State Bar is more than just paying dues and administering the Bar exam. Now that you are a member, be aware of the many services it offers, and let the State Bar benefit you and your new career. **WVL**