



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

Administrative Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Bldg. 1, Room, E-316
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304) 340-2305 Jennifer Bundy
(304) 340-2306 April Harless
(304) 558-1212 FAX
Web Site: www.courtswv.gov
Facebook: [wjudiciary](https://www.facebook.com/wjudiciary)
Twitter: [WVCourts](https://twitter.com/WVCourts)
Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/courtswv/
Email: Jennifer.Bundy@courtswv.gov
Email: April.Harless@courtswv.gov

Supreme Court Establishes Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being

For immediate release

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia has established the West Virginia Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being to make recommendations on how to address mental health and substance abuse issues in the legal profession. The task force is to report to the Supreme Court by December 31, 2018.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Margaret L. Workman issued an order establishing the task force on Wednesday, March 21. Justice Beth Walker will serve as Chairperson of the task force.

“The Court is grateful for Justice Walker’s leadership in this area, and for the time all the members of the task force will contribute,” said Chief Justice Workman. “We hope that the work will not only help lawyers experiencing health issues, but also those who rely on their legal services.”

Justice Walker said, “The demands of modern life, together with the demands of being a lawyer striving to help clients who often are at the lowest points in their lives when they go to court, can be overwhelming at times. It is the duty of the leaders of our profession to do everything we can to ensure clients and the public are well-served.

Chief Justice Workman’s order says, “To maintain public confidence in the legal profession, to increase access to justice, and to promote civility over the toxicity that has contributed to the mental health and substance abuse challenges in the profession, strategic action is required.

“The Court acknowledges that lawyer well-being contributes to organizational success, influences ethics and professionalism, and is a humanitarian concern,” the order says.

National studies indicate lawyers and law students experience chronic stress and higher rates of depression and substance abuse than the general population, the order says. To address those issues, the American Bar Association Commission on Lawyer Assistant Programs, the National Organization of Bar Counsel, and the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers established a National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being. That task force issued a report in August 2017.

The national report makes recommendations for judges, regulators, legal employees, law schools, bar associations and lawyer professional liability carriers. Chief Justice Workman’s order calls on the West Virginia task force to study that report and provide guidelines to implement its recommendations.

The national report, “The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change,” (https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/task_force_report.html), says “To be a good lawyer, one has to be a healthy lawyer.”

Justice Walker noted, “We are very fortunate that a member of the national task force — Chris Newbold — has agreed to serve on our task force. West Virginia is one of the first few states to be taking action based on the excellent work at the national level.”

Chief Justice Workman appointed the following people to the task force:

Robert E. Albury, Jr.

Executive Director of the West Virginia Judicial and Lawyer Assistance Program;

Honorable Michael J. Aloï

United States Magistrate Court Judge;

Charles F. Bagley, III

Campbell Woods, PLLC;

Gregory W. Bowman

William J. Maier, Jr. Dean of the West Virginia University College of Law;

Rachael L. Fletcher Cipoletti

Chief Lawyer Disciplinary Counsel, Office of Disciplinary Counsel;

Honorable Bridget F. Cohee

Judge of the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit;

Dana F. Eddy

Executive Director, West Virginia Public Defender Services;

Mark Gaydos

McNeer, Highland, McMunn & Varner, LC;

Brian A. Glasser

Bailey & Glasser LLP;

Michele Grinberg,

Flaherty Sensabaugh Bonasso PLLC;

P. Bradley Hall, MD

Medical Director, West Virginia Medical Professionals Health Program;

Karen E. Kahle

Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC;

John R. McGhee, Jr.

Kay Casto & Chaney, PLLC;

Christopher L. Newbold

Executive Vice President, ALPS Corporation, ALPS Property & Casualty Insurance Company, Member of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being;

Madeleine J. Jaeck

Bar Admissions Administrator, West Virginia Board of Law Examiners;

Meshea L. Poore

The Law Office of Meshea L. Poore;

Debra H. Scudiere

Kay Casto & Chaney, PLLC; and

Teresa A. Tarr

Chief Disciplinary Counsel, Judicial Investigation Commission.

##