

# *LONG RANGE PLAN*

*Young Lawyers Division of the Tennessee Bar Association*

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## PREAMBLE

The Young Lawyers Division of the Tennessee Bar Association (“Division” or “YLD”) drafted its first Long Range Plan in 1991. The Long Range Plan (“the Plan”) serves as a guide for the YLD in developing and effectuating programs in conjunction with the Division’s Bylaws, mission statement, and Diversity Plan. The Long Range Planning Committee uses the Plan as its primary criterion in evaluating the Division’s success.

The 2017–2018 revision to the Plan is the fifth revision since the Division’s first drafted a Long Range Plan. While the Division’s bylaws mandate that the Plan be revised every five years, there has perhaps never been a more dynamic time in the practice of law than the last 10 years. When the Plan was revised in 2013, the Long Range Planning Committee observed that the preceding “five years [had] presented some of the greatest economic challenges for the legal profession in recent history.” While the years between 2013 and 2018 have proven more stable than those between 2008 and 2013, the legal marketplace has become increasingly dynamic. And, while that marketplace has offered legal innovators the opportunity to revolutionize the way legal services are delivered, it has also proven that there is no one clear path to career satisfaction and personal fulfillment.

Moreover, while modernization has finally come to the legal marketplace, some things never change. Retention of diverse individuals still lags behind retention of their majority counterparts. While recruitment has become more inclusive and diverse, minorities, including women, are still starkly underrepresented in the senior levels of the legal industry—both in the public and the private sectors. Additionally, instances of diagnosed mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, and substance abuse still plague the legal community at rates that substantially outpace other professions. A 2016 study co-funded by the American Bar Association and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation found that more than 20% of working lawyers consume alcohol at level associated with problem drinking.<sup>1</sup> The same study found that nearly 30% of lawyers suffer from depression and 19% suffer with problematic levels of anxiety.<sup>2</sup> Compared to previous studies, these numbers are rising, and, perhaps most concerningly for the Division, attorneys in their first 10 years of practice exhibit the highest rates of each of these challenges.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Krill, Patrick R, J.D., LL.M.; Ryan Johnson, MA; Linda Albert, MSSW, *The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys*, 10 J. Addiction Medicine 46 (2016), [https://journals.lww.com/journaladdictionmedicine/Fulltext/2016/02000/The\\_Prevalence\\_of\\_Substance\\_Use\\_and\\_Other\\_Mental.8.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/journaladdictionmedicine/Fulltext/2016/02000/The_Prevalence_of_Substance_Use_and_Other_Mental.8.aspx).

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

The Division’s mission is “to provide leadership in serving the public and the profession and to promote excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law.” The Long Range Planning Committee believes that a diverse workforce in the legal industry representative of persons of all backgrounds is critical to ensuring our industry properly and fairly addresses the legal questions facing the 21st century. Furthermore, the Committee believes that healthy and thriving lawyers are indispensable to a healthy and thriving profession. To these ends, the Committee proposes the following seven goals designed to ensure that the Division acts in harmony with its mission in the coming years.

In 2018, the Division has 2,617 members. Through this Plan, the Division commits to serving each of these members and to engage in efforts to positively impact and transform the legal profession in Tennessee.

**Goal 1. To promote full and equal participation in the profession regardless of race, gender identity, disability, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation, and to promote greater recruitment and retention of minority lawyers.**

### **Objective**

The cornerstone of justice is its availability to all person without regard to the differences in their background. Just as justice must be for all, participation in the legal industry should be available to everyone without preference for a particular background. Presently, persons of color, lawyers with disabilities, members of non-Christian backgrounds, and members of the LGBTQ+ community are proportionally underrepresented in the legal community. Moreover, all minority populations, including women, are underrepresented in senior and managerial levels of the legal community.

Moving forward, the Division shall engage in programming and service aimed at increasing the number of minority candidates recruited into legal positions. Additionally, the Division shall engage in efforts to ensure minority lawyers advance in the profession and become equal stakeholders with their majority counterparts. Moving forward, the Division will celebrate and promote diversity and inclusion within our profession.

### **Action**

1. Presently, the Diversity Leadership Institute (“DLI”) brings law students with a multitude of backgrounds together from across Tennessee’s law schools. This program takes place from January until the Tennessee Bar Association’s Convention in June. This program has won awards from the American Bar Association YLD and has provided a pathway to leadership within the TBA YLD. In order to ensure the program improves, the TBA YLD should provide graduates with a leadership appointment on the TBA YLD Board during their first year after licensure, provided the graduate commits to staying in Tennessee during that year and has demonstrated a commitment to the DLI program.
2. Develop a scholarship program—incorporating sponsorships where possible—for minority young lawyers to receive assistance to travel to in-person TBA meetings.
3. Work with specialty bar associations to create collaborative content for members.
4. Develop programming to engage minority law students and lawyers beyond the leadership of the YLD and members of DLI, including standalone diversity and inclusion programming (both in-person and web-based programming), as well as programming conducted during TBA meetings.

5. Assist minority lawyers in finding leadership positions within the greater TBA beyond the YLD.
6. Expand membership recruitment efforts to bring all Tennessee young lawyers under a tent of open discussion and inclusivity.

**Goal 2. To assist young lawyers in achieving career satisfaction, career development, and career placement.**

**Objective**

The implicit overarching goal of the TBA YLD is to help lawyers transition from law school into long, successful careers in the practice of law. In order to accomplish this, lawyers have to derive satisfaction and fulfillment from their work; they also have to feel that their career trajectory is upward and calculated to help them achieve their life goals. Over the next five years, the TBA YLD will endeavor to reach all its members to maximize their professional opportunities.

**Action**

1. Expand programming to be both in-person and web-based to reach the maximum number of young lawyers.
2. Develop programming for law students and young lawyers who are in the job market calculated to assist them in maximizing their competitiveness.
3. Develop programming for young lawyers looking to make career transitions.
4. Develop programming to assist young lawyers in managing their practice.
5. Foster an open dialogue about substance abuse and mental health in an effort to support an environment of openness for law students and young lawyers seeking help.
6. Promote dialogue between young lawyers about the rewards and challenges they are facing in their profession.
7. Support and partner with the Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program (“TLAP”).
8. Provide professional development resources through online materials.
9. Encourage and support mentorship within the profession, including mentorship through online materials, including webcasts, podcasts, and other media.

### **Goal 3. To provide young lawyers with resources to ensure personal health and fulfillment.**

#### **Objective**

The TBA YLD wants to foster its members wellbeing in a holistic sense. With substance abuse and mental health challenges still disproportionately plaguing our profession, more than ever young lawyers need resources to help them create a healthy lifestyle, both inside and outside the office. The TBA YLD will continue to provide resources that assist in creating a harmonious lifestyle, while also providing assistance to young lawyers who face struggles in their practice and personal lives.

#### **Action**

1. Engage in honest dialogue about the challenges endemic in the profession, including substance abuse, burnout, and mental health issues.
2. Develop and support efforts to foment change within the profession to make it more conducive to a well-balanced long-term sustainable life.
3. Provide in-person and web-based programming to law students and lawyers about methods and resources for creating a well-balanced life within the meaning of each individual's own goals.
4. Provide in-person and web-based programming addressing substance abuse and mental health.
5. Allocate resources to better support the mission of existing substance abuse and mental health resources, including the creation of a YLD position aimed at partnership opportunities with TLAP.

**Goal 4. To take an active role in the promulgation and discussion of public policy relevant to young lawyers and the legal profession, and to be a voice for positive change in society.**

**Objective**

TBA YLD members occupy positions throughout Tennessee in the public and private sectors. Often, Tennessee young lawyers are working on the front lines of public policy. We are in the best position to weigh in and craft public policy that has a direct effect on the legal profession—including the provision of legal services—and to effect change for all Tennesseans.

**Action**

1. Engage decision makers in the TBA, ABA, and government at all levels to develop and promote public policy relevant and beneficial to Tennesseans.
2. Promote frequent, spirited, and candid discussion of public policy among young lawyers and law students through the YLD's online presence.
3. Develop online resources, including written materials, podcasts, and webcasts that educate and engage young lawyers and law students about relevant public policy issues affecting Tennessee.
4. Provide resources to young lawyers and law students wishing to craft public policy.
5. Take an active roll in discussing public policy proposed in the TBA, ABA, and government.
6. Educate students about the processes of government and how public policy is made, and work with school systems across the state to provide and expand public policy-related education and programs.
7. Encourage young lawyers to take an active role in local government whether it be the above actions or running for office themselves.

**Goal 5. To promote public service and increase the availability of legal services to the public.**

**Objective**

Promote and develop programs, information, resources, and projects to assist lawyers in providing legal services to the public. The TBA YLD has historically been recognized by the larger TBA as “the public service arm of the bar.” It is the YLD’s goal to continue to function as a public service-focused division.

**Plan of Action**

1. Create an online repository of former TBA YLD public service projects for affiliate organizations to utilize.
2. Make the chair of the TBA YLD Public Service Committee available to assist with affiliate public service projects to the extent feasible.
3. Encourage young lawyers to engage in public service and pro bono activities.
4. Continue to provide pro bono legal assistance in disaster situations and educate the public on disaster preparedness.
5. Foster existing relationships with the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services, legal aid organizations, the American Bar Association YLD, and affiliate organizations.
6. Continue participation on the IOLTA Grant Review Committee.
7. Create publicly available resources to assist the public in understanding avenues of access to the legal system.
8. Continue to provide legal assistance in areas of need that serve minority populations as well of the greater public.
9. Provide holistic legal services when possible.

**Goal 6. To maximize the number of lawyers who can take advantage of Division programming.**

**Objective**

With increasing competition from other legal organizations and increased demand on young lawyers to focus on matters in their own locality, the TBA YLD will seek to increase its engagement with affiliate organizations and affinity bar associations to ensure maximum participation from TBA YLD members. Further, the TBA YLD will augment its complement of distance programming.

**Action**

1. Create engaging online content aimed at lawyers from across the state and in diverse practice areas.
2. Engage local affiliate organizations to partner in producing local programming.
3. Leverage technology to livestream programming to members remotely.
4. Produce interactive programs to allow law students and young lawyers to actively participate in programming remotely.
5. Partner with the greater TBA to produce programming specifically aimed at young lawyers during association events like the TBA Convention.

**Goal 7: To promote the highest standard of competence, professionalism, and ethical conduct for young lawyers.**

**Objective**

Consistent with the other goals articulated in this plan, the TBA YLD aims to develop programs, resources, and projects to assist young lawyers in enhancing their substantive legal knowledge and practice skills, including compliance with ethical standards.

**Action**

1. Use technology to produce programming available remotely.
2. Update and revise the online content available to the TBA YLD members.
3. Produce CLEs that provide young lawyers the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of substantive law and practice skills, including compliance with ethical standards.
4. Foster active public policy discussion of the ethical standards to determine areas of weakness that need further attention from the bar.
5. Work with the TBA and the Tennessee Supreme Court to promote higher standards for admission to the practice of law.
6. Improve ethical standards of lawyers by working with the TBA to implement programs designed for that purpose.