

State Bar Legislative Program: Purpose and Guiding Principles

(As Adopted ~~May 19, 2022~~ May 22, 2025)

The State Bar's legislative program is guided by the mission of the State Bar. As set forth in the Strategic Plan for 2022–2027, the State Bar of California's mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation, and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system.

Guiding Principles:

The purpose of the legislative program is to pursue legislation in furtherance of the State Bar mission, monitor legislative activity, and represent and advocate for the State Bar on legislative, policy, and budget matters before the Legislature and Governor.

The State Bar seeks to ensure that laws are in place that enhance the ethical and competent practice of law, the ability to effectively license and regulate lawyers in a manner that protects the public, and provide an effective, fair, just, and appropriate system for the discipline of attorneys who commit misconduct and pose a risk of harm to the public. The State Bar seeks to promote laws to enhance access to the profession and the justice system.

The State Bar strives to promote greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in the legal profession. The State Bar seeks to promote laws that identify effective new tools and appropriate funding for, or eliminate unnecessary obstacles to, carrying out the State Bar's public protection mission.

The State Bar's legislative program seeks to advance the following four goals of the State Bar's Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Protect the public by strengthening the Attorney Discipline System: Administer an attorney discipline system that is efficient, accountable, and transparent.

Goal 2: Protect the public by enhancing access to and inclusion in the legal system: Increase access to the legal system through public outreach and education, improved access to legal advice and services, and a legal profession that reflects the diversity of California.

Goal 3: Protect the public by regulating the legal profession: Promote the ethical and competent practice of law and prevent misconduct by providing education, resources, and support for the legal profession.

Goal 4: Protect the public by engaging partners: Engage partners and stakeholders to enhance public protection and restore the State Bar's credibility, reputation, and impact.

Goal 5: Protect the public through the use of technology and responsible data

management: Strategically invest in and implement technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, and next-generation tools and systems to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Bar.

With regard to all of the above, the Board of Trustees, or its designee, shall establish legislative priorities and direct positions on legislation. Except as set forth in this policy, subentities shall not take positions independently from the State Bar.

In addition, as a state agency, the State Bar monitors and takes positions on legislation that affect the internal operations of the State Bar, such as legislation that impacts the State Bar as an employer, as an owner of commercial property, as a state agency subject to contracting requirements, open meeting requirements, and open records requirements. With regard to such matters, the executive director of the State Bar shall establish legislative priorities and direct positions on legislation in consultation with the Board chair and vice-chair.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC) may independently advocate for policies and take positions on legislation relating to the following: administration of Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts (IOLTA) grants, Equal Access Funds, or similar funds or grant monies intended for the support of qualified legal services projects and qualified support centers, as those terms are defined in section 6213 of the Business and Professions Code. However, the LSTFC may not take positions or advance legislation that impacts the State Bar general fund. The LSTFC shall provide advance notice to the State Bar's legislative director to determine whether the position the LSTFC seeks to advance impacts the State Bar general fund. The legislative director will provide that determination prior to the meeting of the LSTFC (or any of its committees to which the LSTFC has delegated authority) in which the LSTFC will consider the proposed position. To the extent the LSTFC disagrees with the legislative director's determination that pending legislation or potential positions will impact the State Bar general fund, the LSTFC can request review of that by the Board of Trustees. The LSTFC shall keep the State Bar's legislative director apprised of all positions communicated to the Legislature or Governor's office and shall seek to coordinate its advocacy efforts on these matters with the State Bar.