

Media Inquiries

Joe Forward

Communications Director



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

Applicable Policy

Only the President or his/her designee, Executive Director, and Communications Department designee may speak on the State Bar's behalf. All media statements must have prior approval of the Executive Director or his/her designee.

Administrative Policies & Procedures of the State Bar of Wisconsin (July 2024).



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What Does the Policy Mean?

If a member of the media asks you for a quote or information relating to actions of the Board of Governors or the State Bar of Wisconsin, refer them to the State Bar's Communications Director.



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Why is this Important?

- 1. An organization should speak with one voice, through a designated leader.** And, our policy requires it. As a mandatory bar association, our messages must be clear and compliant with policy and the law. Multiple “speakers” creates confusion and misunderstanding among members and the public.



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Why is this Important?

2. When the Board takes an action by majority vote, all Board members should be united in that decision. Airing personal views to the media can lead to misunderstanding and/or misrepresentation of the Board's decisions.



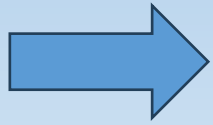
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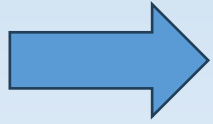
3. Speaking to the media is different than speaking to directly to constituents. Your direct reports to constituents can provide proper and accurate background and context. By communicating directly to your constituents vs. through the media, you can:



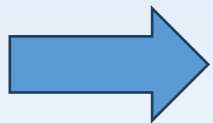
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Explain the Board's rationale for making a decision and why you opposed or supported the decision.



Provide accurate information about the background and rationale for the Board's decision.



Rely on meeting materials, meeting minutes, and/or State Bar reports to update your constituents.



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BUT I Still Want to Speak to the Media

1. You have a right to free speech. If you do speak to the media about a Board-related action, make it clear that you are not speaking for the Board or the State Bar of Wisconsin, that you are speaking in a personal capacity and require the media to indicate that fact in their reporting.



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BUT ... I Still Want to Speak to the Media

2. Understand how your words will be used. Anything you say or state to a reporter, either by email or phone, or in-person conversation, could appear in a news story. If you want something to be “off the record,” obtain that assurance from the reporter in writing before you speak to them.



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Other Tips on Dealing with Media

Assess whether the media outlet is credible in its journalistic practices. Do its reporters follow the Code of Ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists?

See Code of Ethics: <https://www.spj.org/pdf/spj-code-of-ethics-bookmark.pdf>



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