

**STATE BAR OF GEORGIA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, January 17, 2026, 9:00 a.m.
Omni Hotel at the Battery
Atlanta, Georgia**

The 310th meeting of the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia was held at the location, date and time shown above. President Christopher P. Twyman presided and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Matt Caudell, YLD Board of Directors, led the pledge of allegiance.

Invocation

Hannah Couch Hostetler, YLD Board of Directors, gave the invocation.

Special Recognition

President Chris Twyman recognized the members of the judiciary, the past presidents of the State Bar, and other special guests in attendance.

Roll Call

Secretary Shiriki Jones circulated the roll for signature. The list of attendees is attached as Exhibit A.

Future Meetings Schedule

President Chris Twyman reviewed the Future Meetings Schedule.

President Chris Twyman adjourned the Board of Governors Meeting and called to order the Plenary Session of the Membership of the State Bar of Georgia.

Proposed Bylaw Change

Following a report by General Counsel Russ Willard, the members of the State Bar of Georgia took the following actions on the proposed bylaw change:

1. Proposed Changes to Article IV. Section 3. Misconduct and Removal.

This bylaw provision modifies the version adopted at the 2025 Midyear meeting due to analysis of this bylaw's application to situations that have arisen since its adoption. The current Article IV, Section 3, sub-section (h) appears to limit the ability of the Executive Committee to ban or place restrictions on attendance solely to situations where a member (or the member's guest) was requested to leave an event.

To deal with situations that may lie outside the current parameters of the bylaw, such as an event concluding before the incident is made known to appropriate State Bar personnel or law enforcement, the member who is subject to the complaint has left the event prior to any action being taken, or the misconduct occurs in interaction with Bar volunteers or staff outside of an event, it is requested that the bylaw be amended to enable the Executive Committee to take action upon the conclusion of an investigation by the Office of the General Counsel, even if no action was taken against that person at the event(s) in question.

State Bar of Georgia members approved the proposed changes by majority vote.

President Chris Twyman adjourned the Plenary Session of the Membership of the State Bar of Georgia and reconvened the Board of Governors Meeting.

Minutes of the 309th Meeting of the Board of Governors

The minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on October 11, 2025, were approved as presented by a unanimous vote.

Proposed Rule Amendment

Following a report by General Counsel Russ Willard, the Board of Governors, by majority vote, took the following action on the proposed amendment to the following rule:

1. Bar Rule 10-103. Funding.

Due to the current wording of Rule 10-103, the Trustees of the Clients' Security Fund are forbidden from spending down any surplus that has been built up in the fund, as they may not spend more than what is received, via the annual assessment, in a single year. This change allows them to spend up to the annual assessment plus any surplus funds from prior Bar years.

The Board of Governors approved the proposed changes by majority vote.

Nominations of ABA Delegates

President Chris Twyman proposed the ABA delegate nominations listed below. The Board of Governors nominated the following attorneys to the Georgia ABA Delegate Posts as indicated. These positions are open to Georgia lawyers who are ABA members.

<u>Post</u>	<u>Delegate</u>
1	Alvin T. Wong (two-year appointment)
3	Christopher K. Middleton (two-year appointment)
7	V. Sharon Edenfield (two-year appointment)

Nominations of State Bar Officers

The Board of Governors received the following nominations for State Bar officers for the 2025-2026 Bar year:

<u>Office</u>	<u>Nominator</u>	<u>Nominee</u>
Secretary	William T. Davis Tracee R. Benzo (Seconding)	Bert Hummel
Treasurer	Darrell Sutton Zahra S. Karinshak (Seconding)	Shiriki C. Jones
President-elect	Hon. Shondeana Morris Dawn M. Jones (Seconding)	R. Javoyne Hicks

Per Article VII, Section 1 "Nominations and Elections" of the State Bar of Georgia Bylaws, nominations are open for 10 days after this meeting.

Advisory Committee on Legislation (ACL)/Legislative Proposals

Following a report by State Bar Lobbyist Rusty Sewell, the Board of Governors took the following action on proposed legislation:

<u>Legislative Proposal</u>	<u>Germane to Purposes of the Bar</u>	<u>Support on Merits 2/3 Majority</u>
<i>Indigent Defense Committee</i>		
1) Support for the Judicial Council's Budget Request for FY 2026 – Continued Funding for the Georgia Resource Center	Passed by majority vote	Passed by 2/3 majority
<i>Real Property Law Section</i>		
2) Expanding Legal Access to Qualified Special Masters - Bill to Amend O.C.G.A. § 23-3-63	Passed by majority vote	Passed by 2/3 majority

Legislative Update

Legislative Consultant Mark Middleton provided an update on the upcoming legislative session, noting significant turnover resulting from election-year activity and multiple special elections in both the House and Senate. He said several new legislators have been seated, with additional races still pending, resulting in temporary vacancies that could impact closely contested votes. Leadership priorities were discussed in light of the Governor's State of the State address and remarks from legislative leaders, including proposals related to higher education funding, homelessness initiatives, property tax relief, and income tax reform, all occurring alongside election-year messaging. Despite conventional expectations for limited productivity in an election year, it was noted that the session may prove more productive than anticipated.

YLD Director Jessica Oglesby provided an update on a new State Bar initiative developed in response to concerns about the declining number of attorneys serving in the Georgia Legislature. Following discussion at the Fall Meeting, the Governmental Affairs Department, Young Lawyers Division, and Law Practice Management Department collaborated to create "The Gold Dome Track: Answering the Call to the Capitol." The program is designed to educate and support lawyers interested in public service, particularly service in the Georgia General Assembly. The inaugural session will be held January 20 at the Bar Center, featuring discussions with former and current lawyer-legislators and including a networking reception, with a second session scheduled for February 24 focused on campaign planning and practice management. YLD Director Oglesby encouraged participation and noted the program reflects the Bar's commitment to supporting lawyer leadership and public service.

President's Report

President Chris Twyman's report highlighted progress on the Bar's four strategic pillars: improving Bar operations, strengthening committee engagement, advancing emerging technologies, and promoting the rule of law. Updates were provided on committee activity, including actions related to the Attorney-Client Solicitation Committee, noting that while concerns were raised publicly following a committee chair's resignation, the Office of the General Counsel continues its confidential enforcement work and will receive additional resources, with the committee reconstituted to focus on public education. He said the Access to Justice Committee reported that it has completed a statewide pro bono survey, with analysis underway and recommendations anticipated for Executive Committee consideration, and that the Seeking Equal Justice Committee is developing policy recommendations to address racial bias in the administration of justice.

President Twyman also noted recent Supreme Court–approved changes to CLE requirements, the creation of the new Senior Lawyers Division, and ongoing education efforts related to those updates. The report concluded with recognition of the Military and Veterans Law Committee’s work supporting veterans’ benefits, appreciation for Bar leadership, staff, and court partners, and reaffirmation of the Bar’s commitment to protecting the public and strengthening the profession.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Javoyne Hicks reported on the Bar’s finances through October 2025. Financial performance remains in line with the approved budget, with expenses tracking as expected and no material issues to report. She highlighted ongoing work on the electrical panels, tenant improvements, additional audio and visual capabilities, and the behind-the-scenes tasks involved in building ownership. She concluded her report, stating that the Bar’s 2024-2025 financial audit was completed successfully, with no adjustments or issues identified, and was posted on the Bar’s website.

Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Damon Elmore reported that at the midpoint of the Bar year, the Bar remains stable and operates from a position of strength. He said committees, sections, and affiliated groups have met and engaged in substantive work consistent with the President’s initiative to participate actively. He added that Bar Center leasing efforts continue, including active proposals and letters of intent, despite ongoing market and facility-related challenges. Executive Director Elmore said preparations for the upcoming budget cycle were underway, with recommendations forthcoming to the Finance and Executive Committees, and legislative developments continuing to be monitored. He said additional reporting will be provided at the Spring and Annual meetings.

Young Lawyers Division Report

YLD President Veronica Cox reported that the Young Lawyers Division has hosted more than 20 events to date this Bar year, including CLE programs, service projects, and networking events, with additional activity anticipated in the spring. Highlights included community service initiatives, the annual Leadership Academy holiday luncheon, and continued engagement through social media outreach. Upcoming events include the return of the annual YLD kickball tournaments in Savannah and Atlanta, the relaunch of the YLD Podcast as a limited six-episode series, and the YLD Signature Fundraiser scheduled for February 28 in Macon, benefiting Middle Georgia Justice. The fundraiser will also include the presentation of the YLD Lifetime Achievement Award and the Signature Service Award. Additional updates included plans for the YLD Spring Meeting in Asheville and recognition of the YLD Review editors and contributors for their high-quality publication.

Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism Report

President Chris Twyman announced that the Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism (CJCP) has become part of the State Bar, effective January 1, at the request of the Supreme Court. He then called on Chief Justice Nels Peterson to speak more on the vision of the alignment, who emphasized that professionalism has long been a shared priority of the Court and the Bar, noting that while ethics represent the minimum standards required of attorneys, professionalism encompasses broader expectations, including how lawyers treat one another and engage with the community. He further stated that a renewed focus is needed on protecting and defending the Rule of Law, which he described as a core responsibility of the legal profession. The Chief Justice noted concerns about a declining societal commitment to the Rule of Law and stressed that no individual is above its requirements or below its protections. He encouraged a coordinated, Bar-wide effort to defend the integrity of the Rule of Law, particularly as the Commission’s work expands across the Bar during the transition period.

Executive Director Karlise Grier reported on recent activities of the Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism and thanked Chair Chief Justice Nels Peterson for his leadership. She announced details for the 26th Annual Benham Awards, to be held April 14, with the program scheduled to begin at 11:00 a.m. She recognized the committee chairs for their assistance in selecting recipients and planning the event. She also noted that the February 2025 live webinar, *Thoughts on Living and Practicing with Professionalism*, is available for video replay through March 31 for a \$4 fee. Access information is available on the website, and registration is not required. She reminded members that she is available to assist with panels or CLE programs as needed. Additional updates included Law Day 2026, themed *The Rule of Law and the American Dream*, and the upcoming Connect with a Colleague Contest, scheduled for March 1 through April 30, 2026.

Administrative Office of the Courts Content Management System Demo

Chief Technology Officer of the Administrative Office of the Courts Ben Luke gave a demonstration of their new content management system, along with Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, Sean Golden, and Bharath Parthasarathy.

Law Practice Management Program

The Board of Governors received a written report on the activities of the Law Practice Management Program.

ICLE Report

The Board of Governors received a written report on the activities of the Institute of Continuing Legal Education of the State Bar of Georgia.

Media Report

The Board of Governors received a media report from the Communications Department.

Old Business

President-Elect Bill Gentry reported that the Supreme Court of Georgia approved the Senior Lawyers Division. He was presented with a plaque in recognition of his efforts.

New Business

Board Member Mark Alexander reported that after 30 years in civil and private practice, he has transitioned to serve as a Circuit Public Defender. He noted a strong culture of excellence within indigent defense; however, the office is currently operating at approximately 50% capacity, with nine attorney vacancies. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, with a particular need for experienced trial lawyers. He said to contact him if there is any interest.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Executive Session

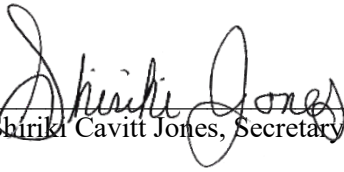
There was no executive session.

Remarks / Q&A / Comments / Suggestions

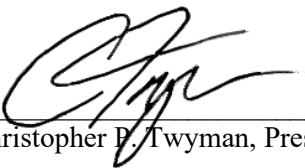
President Chris Twyman opened the floor to remarks, questions, comments and suggestions.

Adjournment

There being no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.


Shiriki Cavitt Jones, Secretary

Approved:


Christopher P. Twyman, President