



THE MISSISSIPPI BAR

Pathways to Leadership to Foster Diversity and Inclusion in the Bar

By The Mississippi Bar's Diversity Committee

Introduction

As part of its current Strategic Plan, The Mississippi Bar adopted the goal of fostering diversity and inclusion among members of the Bar community. The Bar has worked to achieve this goal through the formation of a Diversity Committee, the adoption of a Diversity Statement, a focus on strengthening relationships with local and affinity Bars, and intentional efforts to create pathways for involvement focused on diversity and inclusion.

The Mississippi Bar has adopted the following Diversity Statement:

The Mississippi Bar is committed to fostering diversity in the legal profession. We recognize that a diverse group of talented legal professionals is critically important to the success of every law firm, corporate or government law department, law school, public service organization and every other organization that includes attorneys. The myriad of backgrounds within our membership reflects the diversity of our community, and we value the unique viewpoints of all members. We endeavor to be an environment in which no member will be advantaged or disadvantaged because of race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age, disability, familial status or any other real or perceived differences. This emphasis on diversity allows us to offer varied perspectives, interests, and experiences to both the practice of law and the administration of justice. We continue to engage in an intentional effort to advance diversity and inclusion within our leadership, membership, programmatic agenda and community endeavors. We are confident that these efforts will strengthen the effectiveness of the programs and services offered by the Mississippi Bar and will allow all members to participate equally and fully in our profession.

To meet the Bar's diversity and inclusion efforts, the Pathways to Leadership to Foster Diversity and Inclusion in The Mississippi Bar serves to increase diverse participation and leadership in the Bar by providing to lawyers information about the various aspects of the Bar and the means by which lawyers can become involved.

The gender and racial makeup of the active members of the Bar, which includes all attorneys who are actively licensed to practice law in Mississippi, is as follows.

Active Members of The Mississippi Bar		
Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	2,752	32%
Male	5,826	68%
Race		
Asian	30	>1%
African American	884	10%
Hispanic/Latinx	34	>1%
Native American	10	>1%
Caucasian	7,565	88%
Other	55	>1%

Data as of 1/31/24

Young Lawyers Division

The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) is the starting place for lawyers to become active in the Bar. All lawyers 37 years and younger or over the age of 37 during their first three years of practice following their admission are members of the YLD. The gender and racial makeup of the members of the Young Lawyers Division is as follows.

Active Members of the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi Bar		
Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	738	47%
Male	825	53%
Race		
Asian	16	1%
African American	212	14%
Hispanic/Latinx	16	1%
Native American	1	>1%
Caucasian	1,299	83%
Other	19	1%

Data as of 1/31/24

Committee Members

The YLD has several committees on which to serve. Volunteering to serve on a YLD Committee is a great way to begin your involvement in the Bar.

There are currently [16 YLD Committees](#). These committees include:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Attorney Wellness | Bar Admissions Ceremony | Bylaws |
| Child Advocacy | Communications | Disaster Legal Assistance |
| Diversity and Social Justice | High School Mock Trial | Law School Relations |
| Lawyer in Every Classroom | Local Affiliates | Long Range Planning |
| Nominations, Elections, and Awards | Public Service | Seminars |
| Solo and Small Firm Practitioners | | |

YLD Committee Preference Forms are emailed to all young lawyers each summer. Whichever committee you sign up for, you will be given preference for when Committee assignments are made. Meetings are held at The Mississippi Bar Center in Jackson or by remote means.

Committee Chairs

All YLD committees have chairs or co-chairs. The incoming YLD President appoints committee chairs from someone who has previously served on the committee. Committee chairs are YLD members from throughout the state. Meetings are held at the Mississippi Bar Center in Jackson or by remote means. The gender and racial makeup of the members of the Young Lawyers Division Committees is as follows.

Members of the Committees of the Young Lawyers Division		
Gender	Chairs	Members
Female	71%	72%
Male	29%	28%
Race		
Asian	7%	2%
African American	29%	26%
Hispanic/Latinx	7%	2%
Native American	0%	0%
Caucasian	57%	70%
Other	0%	2%

Data as of 1/31/24

Board of Directors Members

Board members are nominated by the Nominations, Elections, & Awards Committee chaired by a young lawyer. The Directors’ slate consists of two people for 16 seats with alternating elections each year. Lawyers who have been active in committees and projects are considered for these positions. The Board also consists of the Presidents of the 12 YLD local affiliates (Delta Young Lawyers, Golden Triangle Young Lawyers, Harrison County Young Lawyers, Hattiesburg Area Young Lawyers, Jackson County Young Lawyers, Jackson Young Lawyers, Jones County Young Lawyers, Lauderdale County Young Lawyers, Lee County Young Lawyers, Northwest Mississippi Young Lawyers, Oxford Area Young Lawyers and Warren County Young Lawyers). You can be on the Young Lawyers Division Board if you are just active in your local area and work your way up to being president of your young lawyers’ local bar.

Officers

There are four officers of the YLD: President, President-Elect, Secretary, and Immediate Past President. The President-Elect is nominated each year from three rotating districts: Northern, Central, and Southern. The criteria for nomination for President shall be service for no less than two years in the following capacities: as a Committee Chair of a statewide Committee of the Division; or, combined service of two years, one year at least in two of the following positions: as a Local Affiliate President, Committee Chair of a statewide Committee, Director of The Mississippi Bar YLD, or Secretary of The Mississippi Bar YLD, or, service on The Mississippi Bar YLD Board of Directors for two years.

The criteria for nomination for the Secretary position shall be service for no less than one year of the following offices: Local Affiliate President, Committee Chair of a Statewide Committee, or Director of

The Mississippi Bar YLD; or, service for no less than two years as a member of any Statewide Committee. The Secretary position can be from any location throughout the state. The officers have specific duties specified in the YLD Board Manual.

Projects

Community service projects include judging regional and statewide high school mock trial competitions, speaking to classrooms during the Lawyer in Every Classroom program, volunteering for pro bono opportunities supported by the YLD, and volunteering for other projects with a local bar association. All you have to do is volunteer. Information about these opportunities is distributed via the weekly Bar Briefs email and through the YLD's social media accounts.

Bar

Participation in the YLD's committees make for a seamless transition into the Bar's committees and further helps to achieve continuity in program development and leadership as colleagues make the transition together. There are several Bar committees in which to become involved.

Bar Committees

As in most volunteer organizations, much of the work is done through the committee process. The Mississippi Bar is no exception. The number of Bar committees varies from year to year depending on the work of the Bar. Committees can only be created by the Board of Commissioners. Generally, committee appointments are made by the President. Emails can be sent directly to the Executive Director or the Bar President-Elect to be considered for one of these appointments. Their email addresses can be located through the Bar's online Lawyer Directory. Additionally, Committee openings may be advertised in the weekly Bar Briefs email. The Bar's Bylaws provide for both Standing and Ad Hoc Committees. Standing committees have staggered terms meaning only a few openings are available each year. Ad Hoc committees are all one-year terms, and members are appointed each year.

For FY 2023-2024, there are 18 committees. The current Committees of the Bar include:

Access to Justice	Bench-Bar Liaison	Budget and Finance
Clients' Security Fund	Diversity	Ethics
Fee Dispute Resolution	Health Insurance Benefit Study	Law Practice Management & Technology
Lawyers and Judges Assistance	Memorial	Mississippi Lawyer Editorial Review
Professional Responsibility	Professionalism	Public Information
Resolutions	Summer School for Lawyers	Unauthorized Practice of Law

Most committees begin the year of work during Committee Week held in August of each year. After those initial meetings, committees accomplish their work by meetings conducted in person at the Bar center or remotely through email, videoconferences, and conference calls.

Committee Chairs

The President of the Bar appoints committee chairs and co-chairs, and they serve for one year. Generally, committee chairs are selected from current members of committees. The gender and racial makeup of the members of the Bar's Committees is as follows.

Members of the Committees of the Mississippi Bar		
Gender	Chairs	Members
Female	61%	46%
Male	39%	54%
Race		
Asian	0%	<1%
African American	22%	20%
Hispanic/Latinx	0%	1%
Native American	0%	<1%
Caucasian	78%	79%
Other	0%	<1%

Data as of 1/31/24

[Board of Commissioners](#)

The Board of Commissioners is the governing body of the Bar. It is composed of the officers of the Bar and representatives from Mississippi's 23 circuit court districts, as well as a Minority-at-Large representative. Commissioners are nominated for a three-year term by a local nominating committee from within the circuit court districts. They are elected by lawyers in their respective districts. The Minority-at-Large representative is elected by African American lawyers statewide. The Bar's only role in the selection of commissioners is to conduct the election and to ensure that no conflict of interest exists for nominees that would preclude them from serving.

[Bar President](#)

The office of President of The Mississippi Bar is an elected position. Two candidates are nominated each year to run for President, with three rotating districts of the state. They are elected by a ballot of all members of the Bar.

[Bar Programs](#)

There are many opportunities for lawyers to serve without being on a committee or the Board. Each year hundreds of volunteers are needed for programs like the Young Lawyers Division's annual Mock Trial Competition and the Lawyer in Every Classroom at both Mississippi law schools. All you have to do is to volunteer throughout the year for the Bar's membership and community programs.

[Sections](#)

There are 18 substantive law sections that are open to all Members. Membership dues are \$15 per section. You can indicate the Section(s) you want to join on the Bar's enrollment form distributed in the Fall or by emailing the Bar's Programs and Events Coordinator anytime during the year.

The current Sections of the Bar include:

[Alternate Dispute Resolution](#)

[Appellate Practice](#)

[Business Law](#)

[Child Welfare and Child Advocacy](#)

[Estates and Trusts](#)

[Family Law](#)

[Government Law](#)

[Health Law](#)

[Intellectual Property, Entertainment, and Sports Law](#)

[Labor and Employment Law](#)

[Litigation](#)

[Prosecutors](#)

[Real Property](#)

[SONREEL](#)

[Taxation](#)

[Veterans and Military Law](#)

[Women in the
Profession](#)

[Workers' Compensation](#)

After joining a Section, you can contact the officers if you would like to serve on a Section's Executive Committee the following year. Nominations are made in late winter each year. The gender and racial makeup of the members of the Sections is as follows.

Members of the Sections of the Mississippi Bar		
Gender	Executive Committees	Members
Female	45%	38%
Male	55%	62%
Race		
Asian	0%	<1%
African American	9%	12%
Hispanic/Latinx	0%	<1%
Native American	0%	<1%
Caucasian	91%	86%
Other	0%	<1%

Data as of 1/31/24

Contact

For general inquiries or more information on how to get involved in Bar activities contact: eventsandprograms@msbar.org.