

## **Council on Access and Fairness Report**

**DATE:** June 23, 2014

**TO:** Members, Nominations and Appointments Committee

**FROM:** Hon. Cynthia Loo, Chair, Council on Access & Fairness  
Patricia Lee, Special Assistant for Diversity & Bar Relations

**SUBJECT:** Report and Recommendations re State Bar Appointments Process

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Prior to the appointment of the Council on Access & Fairness in 2007, the former Access & Fairness Committees conducted outreach and recruitment to increase the diversity of the State Bar applicant pool and ultimate appointments. The Committees also monitored demographic data from State Bar appointed entities to review progress made in the increased recruitment and appointment of diverse attorneys. Based on their review and findings, the Committees provided feedback to increase diverse applications and appointments. With the sunset of the Committees, the Council on Access & Fairness (COAF) was charged by the Board with resuming this function. COAF is providing this annual report to assist in the ongoing efforts to increase diversity in appointments to State Bar entities.

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### **BACKGROUND**

Prior to the appointment of the Council on Access & Fairness (COAF) in 2007, the Chairs of the former Access and Fairness Committees convened by conference call on a monthly basis to share information and to strategize on initiatives to increase diversity in the profession, including increasing diversity among State Bar appointments. Ensuring diverse State Bar appointments and member representation was a high priority for the committees. Since its creation, COAF was charged with resuming the appointments activities previously performed by the Access & Fairness Committees including outreach, recruitment and assessment activities to encourage bar-wide diversity among applications and presenting specific findings to the Board Committee for its consideration and discussion.

Consistent with its charge, COAF sought to *“identify and encourage attorneys from diverse backgrounds to become active participants in the administration and governance of the State Bar and make specific recommendations to the Board for increasing that participation.”*

COAF appointed its Diversity Coalition committee to initiate outreach internally among State Bar entities and externally with diversity stakeholders. The COAF implemented an

annual outreach Initiative to inform entities about the work of the COAF, to promote collaboration among the diversity stakeholder groups and with COAF, and to encourage diverse attorneys to consider submitting applications for State Bar appointment. In addition, COAF continues to conduct additional outreach to all local, minority and specialty bar associations and convenes appointments workshops in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Finally, COAF will convene a leadership conference in October 2014, which will include information for participants on the application process and qualifications for State Bar entities and the value of participation in these entities toward developing leadership skills and enhancing professional opportunities.

With these ongoing activities, COAF offers the following feedback for ongoing consideration by the Board's Nominations and Appointments Committee.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Consult with State Bar Sections and Committees that appear to be making progress toward increasing or maintaining diversity and seek to identify "best practices" that can be shared with other State Bar entities and through the State Bar Council on Sections.
2. Encourage State Bar entities to partner with the COAF Diversity Coalition to gather and disseminate detailed information on specific appointments and service requirements for the various entities, so that potential applicants can be in a position to meet the initial requirements and understand the expectations for serving on the various entities.
3. Encourage State Bar entities to initiate broad based outreach re: the State Bar appointments process earlier in the year to provide maximum opportunity for potential applicants to learn about the State Bar appointment opportunities and the appointment process and to complete application packets by the February 1 submission deadline
4. Encourage State Bar entities to create diversity liaison positions inviting COAF members and contacts, as well as diverse attorney members from local and minority bar sections and committees to enhance communication about and collaboration on initiatives addressing diversity issues and initiatives.
- 5 COAF to continue convening Appointments Workshops early enough during the appointment cycle to provide maximum time for potential applicants to learn about State Bar appointments opportunities, to walk through the appointments and application process, and to complete the application packets by the February 1<sup>st</sup> submission deadline. COAF will continue to invite key State Bar entities to participate in the workshops.
- 6 Provide mentoring for potential applicants re: State Bar appointments opportunities and provide feedback on the completion of the Appointments Application.

The committees and members of the Diversity Coalition who have participated in Appointments Workshops and/or who are experienced in reviewing State Bar applications have provided direct feedback to applicants who submitted their draft applications for comment. This has proven to be a valuable service to potential applicants, resulting in many being appointed and expressing appreciation for the assistance received.

7. Take advantage of the experience and expertise of diverse attorneys who have successfully served on State Bar entities and encourage them to apply for appointment to other State Bar entities upon the completion of their terms.

8. Increase State Bar outreach at all levels, including through the Board of Trustees, State Bar publications and electronic communications, regarding the various opportunities available for member participation with State Bar entities and the professional benefits of such participation.

9. To facilitate the entire appointments process, continue to make the State Bar Application Form and appointments information re: State Bar entities available on the State Bar website throughout the year and continue to provide for online submission of applications.