

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY DIVERSITY COMMITTEE PERMANENCY PROPOSAL

Issue

Should the Representative Assembly make the Representative Assembly Diversity Committee a permanent standing committee?

Proponent

REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Chair: Yolanda M. Bennett – Ingham (30) yolanda.bennett@lbwl.com
Voting Members: Michael Blau – Oakland (6) mikeblau924@gmail.com
Patrick D. Crandell – Oakland (6) patrick.crandell@ceflawyers.com
Hon. Kristina Robinson Garrett – Wayne (3)
kristina.robinsongarrett@36thdistrictcourt.org
Hon. Christopher S. Ninomiya – Dickinson (41) cn@dickinsoncountymi.gov
Associate Member: Nicole Evans – Ingham (30) nevans@54bdistrictcourt.com
Chair – Special Issues Committee
RA Leadership: Chair, Chelsea Rebeck – Oakland (6) chelsea@rebecklawpc.com
Vice Chair, Nicholas Ohanesian – Kent (17) nickoahnesian@yahoo.com
Clerk, Gerrow Mason – St. Clair (3) gdblues@yahoo.com

Synopsis

Making the Representative Assembly (RA) Diversity Committee a permanent standing committee ensures continued efforts to increase diversity of member representation; recruit, support and train diverse attorneys for leadership positions; strengthen relationships with affinity bar associations and other diverse legal groups; assess diversity & inclusion gaps or barriers that prevent participation; showcase the diversity of RA members and the importance of a diverse and inclusive profession through RA content, imagery, speakers, & events; collect, maintain, analyze and address RA membership diversity demographic data; encourage diversity of thought and opinion; and effectively communicate the RA's commitment and expectations related to diversity and inclusion within the RA.

The RA Diversity Committee was formed under Rule 7.8:

7.8 Other Committees. The Representative Assembly may create such other committees as it considers necessary to conduct its business. To further the consideration of a subject by the Assembly, the Chairperson of the Assembly may appoint a special committee of not more than five (5) members, not more than two (2) of whom shall be members from the same judicial circuit, to consider the matter and report to the Assembly. No committee of the Assembly shall contain a majority of members from any one judicial circuit.

This proposal is supported by the RA Diversity Committee and the Special Issues Committee.

Background

Immediate Past Chair Aaron Burrell saw the need for a diverse RA membership representation of the community we serve. He formed the RA Diversity Committee in 2020 as a special committee to (1) ensure meaningful diversity and inclusion in the ranks of the Representative Assembly; and (2) make proposals and craft policy that will enhance diversity and inclusion in the greater bar community. Chair Chelsea Rebeck continued the committee in 2021 and remains passionate about its goals and purpose. During the past eight months, the committee focused on advertising and marketing to recruit attorneys from diverse backgrounds for Representative Assembly. The committee also reached out to and requested assistance from affinity bar communities in its efforts to reach the widest pool of diverse candidates. Through the State Bar we utilized various resources to increase and promote awareness of the benefits of RA membership.

The RA Diversity Committee currently consists of 5 voting members, 1 associate member, and RA Leadership.

Committee Structure under the Revised Rule 7.8

(The current Rule 7.8 Other Committees would become Rule 7.9)

7.8 Diversity. The Committee on Diversity, consisting of eleven (11) members, not more than two (2) of whom shall be members from the same judicial circuit, and no more than three (3) associate members, shall ensure meaningful diversity and inclusion in the ranks of the Representative Assembly; make proposals and craft policy that will enhance diversity and inclusion in the greater bar community; and make appropriate recommendations to the Representative Assembly.

Opposition

No known opposition.

Prior Action by Representative Assembly

No prior action.

Fiscal and Staffing Impact on State Bar of Michigan

No known impact.

STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN POSITION

By vote of the Representative Assembly on September 18, 2021.

Should the Representative Assembly make the Representative Assembly Diversity Committee a permanent standing committee?

- (a) Yes
- or
- (b) No