



The Louisiana Supreme Court NEWS

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LOUISIANA SUPREME COURT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING 2020 BAR EXAMINATION

Today the Louisiana Supreme Court [issued an Order](#) permitting certain “Qualified Candidates” for admission to the Louisiana State Bar to be admitted to practice without the requirement of sitting for and passing the bar examination in 2020, provided all other usual requirements for admission are met. In addition, Qualified Candidates must complete 25 hours of continuing legal education and the Louisiana State Bar Association’s [“Transition Into Practice”](#) mentoring program by December 31, 2021.

Dissenting from [the Court’s Order](#) were [Justice Jefferson D. Hughes III](#), [Justice James T. Genovese](#), and [Justice William J. Crain](#).

The additional educational and mentoring requirements enacted in today’s Order for those Qualified Candidates who elect the emergency admissions option will serve as guardrails to ensure the competency and integrity of the newly-admitted attorneys during their first year of practice.

Registered applicants who do not meet the definition of “Qualified Candidate” will still have two opportunities to take the bar examination in a one-day, remote format in 2020: August 24, 2020 and October 10, 2020.

Concern and discussions about administration of this summer’s bar exam began when the pandemic first hit in March. The Court solicited input from the Louisiana Supreme Court Committee on Bar Admissions and the deans of the four Louisiana law schools, and explored numerous options of how to administer the bar safely, keeping the

health and safety of the bar applicants at the forefront. Following extensive study and collaboration with the Committee and the deans, and considering the infection rate at the time, on May 8, 2020, the Court announced a plan to administer a modified one-day in-person examination in four cities to achieve the proper social distancing protocols required during this public health crisis. The Court continued to study this ever-evolving issue and on June 3, 2020, announced an additional option for applicants to take the bar examination remotely.

Faced with a rapidly rising coronavirus infection rate, especially among young adults, and an ongoing concern for public health and the safety of the registered bar exam applicants, on July 15, 2020, the Court announced the cancellation of the July 27, 2020 examination. With an in-person administration deemed too uncertain for the near future, the Court considered but rejected issuing a mandate that the bar examination be taken remotely for first-time test takers. While the Court did agree to allow the voluntary selection of a remote examination option by an applicant, the majority of the Justices were not willing to mandate that the examination be taken in settings which might encounter insurmountable challenges wholly-unrelated to the competence to practice law.

This is not the first time that the Louisiana Supreme Court has waived the requirement of a written bar examination due to emergency circumstances. In June, 1953, the Louisiana Supreme Court waived the requirement for the written examination for certain candidates during the existence of the Korean Conflict.

Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson commented, “This COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, and it calls for unprecedented and bold action, including implementation of today’s Order granting one-time emergency admission to the Bar with additional requirements. This pandemic, not experienced globally since the 1918 Spanish Flu, has caused absolute disruption not only to the legal profession but to every aspect of society, with serious illness prevalent, schools shuttered nationally since March, unemployment at record high rates, and rising infection rates. We are bombarded with new information daily as we attempt to navigate these uncharted waters.

“Despite these uncertain times, as Justices, we continue to have a responsibility to ensure the competency and integrity of the legal profession. In my opinion, today’s limited one-time Order, including the additional requirements for bar admission, fulfills this responsibility. While we know that cancellation of the in-person July 2020 bar

examination was concerning to the many law school graduates who have spent countless hours in preparation, we believe that our action today is not only warranted, but necessary during this public health crisis. On behalf of the Court, I extend our thanks to the Louisiana Supreme Court Committee on Bar Admissions, the deans of the four Louisiana law schools and the Louisiana State Bar Association for their respective roles and contributions in bringing this solution to fruition.”

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