



Supreme Court of Georgia

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SUPREME COURT RESCHEDULES BAR EXAM, ADOPTS RULE ALLOWING LAW SCHOOL GRADUATES TO PRACTICE TEMPORARILY WITHOUT BAR LICENSE

The Supreme Court of Georgia announced today that due to the coronavirus, it has rescheduled the July 28-29 bar exam for September 9-10. Out of concern for the difficulties this necessary delay creates for recent law school graduates, the Court also has adopted a temporary rule allowing recent graduates to become provisionally admitted to practice law before taking the bar exam.

“As we carefully considered all of our options, it became clear that the bar exam should not go forward in July,” Chief Justice Harold Melton said. Up to 1,500 people take the July bar exam each year, and almost all sit close together in the same convention hall. The Court took this step after consulting with the Georgia Department of Public Health.

“At the same time, it is vitally important to the Court that the law students and graduates affected by this delay be afforded the opportunity to move forward in their careers,” Chief Justice Melton said. “That is why we are creating this new rule allowing provisional admission. We appreciate the advice we have received from the deans of Georgia’s five law schools in crafting this rule, as well as the leadership of the State Bar of Georgia and the Board of Bar Examiners. I am confident that the new rule strikes a good balance between protecting the public and preserving opportunities for law school graduates.”

The new rule allows anyone who has graduated in the previous 18 months from an American Bar Association-accredited law school to apply to the Office of Bar Admissions for a certificate of provisional admission. The application process requires a recent graduate to:

- Obtain a certificate of character and fitness from the Board to Determine Fitness of Bar Applicants (an ordinary prerequisite for being eligible to take the bar exam);
- Be certified as competent to practice law by the graduate's dean or law professor; and
- Have not failed a bar exam previously.

Before beginning the practice of law, any provisionally admitted graduate must register with the State Bar of Georgia and identify a Georgia lawyer who will supervise the graduate. The new rule also provides a process by which lawyers admitted to the bar of another state may obtain a provisional admission. Additional information about the new rule will be available soon from the Office of Bar Admissions.

Georgia's five law school deans have issued the following joint statement in support of the Supreme Court's rule: "This pandemic presents profound challenges for our State and our profession. Those challenges demand collaborative leadership across institutions. Exemplary of that collaborative leadership, Georgia's law schools, the Judiciary, and the Bar have long enjoyed a relationship characterized by exceptional good will. Drawing on that relationship, the deans of the five Georgia law schools are grateful to the leaders of the Judiciary and the Bar for their thoughtful and collaborative approach in addressing these present challenges. We are united in our support of the Court's order and, in executing it, resolve to help our graduates with their entry into the profession and their efforts to serve the many legal needs of Georgia's citizens."