

Law deans, lawyers commend Supreme Court for bar waiver

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ahernandez4@tulane.edu
561-629-4706



The deans of Louisiana's four law schools and 16 prominent leaders of the Louisiana bar, including eight past presidents, have joined in commending the Louisiana Supreme Court for its recent decision to waive the bar exam for recent graduates.

The "Court charted an alternative path that demonstrated courage, creativity and compassion in reckoning with the cold realities of the pandemic," the leaders wrote in a joint statement. "It creates a path for emergency admission to the Louisiana Bar for a limited group of qualified candidates, under the unique and limited circumstances of the pandemic, while imposing additional safeguards to help ensure their readiness to practice."

Signing the letter are Madeleine Landrieu, dean of Loyola University College of Law; Lee Ann W. Lockridge, interim dean of Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center; David D. Meyer, dean of Tulane University Law School; and John Pierre, chancellor of Southern University Law Center.

Among the 16 practitioners who signed the letter are a number of former Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) presidents. Within hours of the Court's decision last week, the current president of the LSBA and many of the state's largest law firms announced they were ready to help carry out additional training for these newest lawyers and provide mentorship at the highest levels.

"The Court's balanced judgment and the immediate and constructive offer of partnership it inspired are both credits to the unique strength of our state's legal profession," the leaders wrote.

The [Louisiana Supreme Court on July 22](#) announced it would allow emergency admission to the state bar to applicants unable to sit for the July 27 bar exam after it was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The order effectively adopted a proposal [advanced by the deans of the state's four law schools](#) earlier this month granting admission to applicants who were registered to sit for the Louisiana bar exam for the first time in July or October of this year, graduated in December 2019 or after, and satisfy the usual character and fitness review.

Candidates (such as those who graduated prior to December 2019 or who had previously failed the Louisiana bar exam) would be given the opportunity to sit for the bar exam remotely in August or October.

The candidates must agree to take an additional 25 hours of continuing legal education and complete the LSBA's ["Transition to Practice"](#) mentoring program by December of 2021.

"This COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, and it calls for unprecedented and bold action, including implementation of (the July 22) order granting one-time emergency admission to the Bar with additional requirements," wrote Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson in issuing the exemption. "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.”

The full statement can be read [here](#).

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Deans of Louisiana's four law schools