



Supreme Court of Florida

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Craig Waters

(850) 414-7641 or publicinformation@flcourts.org

Florida’s Chief Justice apologizes to bar Exam applicants and the public over failures in pandemic procedures for August bar examination

TALLAHASSEE – Chief Justice Charles Canady has issued a video apology to bar exam applicants and the public over failures in pandemic procedures for the August 2020 Florida bar examination. These failures led to a late cancellation Sunday of an exam scheduled for today.

“We acknowledge and accept the criticism that has been directed at the Court and the Board of Bar Examiners,” Canady said. “Our inability to offer the bar examination in August was a failure. We apologize for that failure.”

Canady said that the Court is now putting in place measures to lessen the hardship on bar exam applicants by authorizing a new stop-gap program. It will let applicants work in the law under the supervision of licensed attorneys until they can take the rescheduled bar exam in October 2020.

He also said that the Court and the Bar Examiners will take steps to improve their communications about the bar exam and to make sure there are backup plans for future uncertainties caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

“In particular, we assure you that we will put in place alternative plans so that, one way or another, there will be an October administration of the bar exam,” Canady said.

The video is available for viewing through the [Florida Supreme Court’s website](#) and its [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages. The closed-captioning transcript of the video is attached.

CLOSED CAPTIONING TRANSCRIPT

Statement of Florida Chief Justice Charles Canady

August 19, 2020

Late in the day on Sunday, August 16, our court received and approved a recommendation from the Board of Bar Examiners to postpone the on-line bar examination scheduled for August 19. This postponement follows the rescheduling of the planned in-person exam in July in order to administer the exam online. The earlier delay in July happened because an upsurge in Covid-19 cases posed an unreasonable risk to the health of examinees participating in an in-person examination. The most recent postponement this past Sunday was a result of the failure of the online platform that had been chosen for the administration of the exam.

Our court deeply regrets this additional delay in the administration of the bar exam. From the outset of our consideration of how to move forward with the bar exam in the face of the pandemic, our goal has been to administer as expeditiously as possible a valid and secure examination in a way that protects the health of all examinees. We take seriously our obligation under the Florida Constitution to protect the public in the decisions we make regarding admission to the practice of law. But we also take seriously our obligation to applicants for admission to the bar.

We understand that the bar exam is one of the most important events in the lives of the examinees – the culmination of years of hard work and for many a rite of passage to a lifetime career in the law. We recognize that for most aspiring lawyers preparation for the exam is a matter of intense focus for an extended period of time.

We also understand that a three-month delay in licensure is a serious matter – a disruption in life that takes a financial toll and an emotional toll. And we know that for some applicants, such a delay will cause severe hardship. We are seeking to mitigate the impact of this delay through the supervised practice program that we are instituting, but we are keenly aware that this program is a stopgap measure that will provide limited relief to a limited number of applicants.

We acknowledge and accept the criticism that has been directed at the court and the Board of Bar Examiners. Our inability to offer the bar examination in August was a failure. We apologize for that failure. I can't guarantee you that the path forward will be flawless, but I can guarantee you that we have learned from this mistake and that it will not be repeated. In particular, we assure you that we will put in place alternative plans so that, one way or another, there will be an October administration of the bar exam in Florida.

Finally, I want to tell you that we take to heart the concerns that have been expressed about the adequacy of communication concerning developments related to the bar exam. Accurately communicating in an uncertain and changing environment presents special challenges. Notwithstanding those challenges, we are committed to improving our communication with those concerned about the administration of the bar exam. It is very reasonable that applicants want to know what is going on regarding planning for the October administration, and we will strive to provide timely and accurate information as it becomes available.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to address these issues as we move forward toward our goal of safely administering a valid and secure Florida bar examination. Thank you.

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