

SUPREME COURT ORDERS
CANCELLATION OF THE FALL 2020 BAR EXAMINATION AND APPROVES
ADMINISTRATION OF ONLINE EXAMINATION

Nashville – The Tennessee Supreme Court today ordered the cancellation of the Uniform Bar Examination in Tennessee scheduled for September 30-October 1, 2020, citing the current trajectory of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although stringent public health and safety protocols were planned for the administration of the examination, the Court decided that the in-person Fall Examination could not be safely administered with reasonable certainty. To mitigate delay and uncertainty, the Court ordered the Board of Law Examiners to administer an online, remotely-proctored alternative Admissions Assessment on October 5-6, 2020, that will be comprised of questions prepared by the National Conference of Bar Examiners (“NCBE”). The Admissions Assessment will be comprised of a Multistate Performance Test item, three Multistate Essay Examination questions, and 100 Multistate Bar Examination questions.

In entering its order, the Court recognized the hardships that COVID-19 has placed upon recent law school graduates, applicants to the Tennessee bar, and administrators. The Court also considered the interests of the applicants, the public, and the administration of justice relating to the licensing and admission of attorneys.

Applicants who pass the online bar examination will be eligible for admission in Tennessee. Although successful applicants will not earn a portable Uniform Bar Examination score, the Board of Law Examiners has entered into reciprocal agreements with District of Columbia, Maryland and Massachusetts for transfer of scores earned on the same online exam as a qualifying score for admission and is working to establish similar agreements with other jurisdictions offering the same online exam.

“Balancing the need for recent law school graduates to be afforded an opportunity to complete the licensing process with the need to protect the public by establishing that new lawyers meet the basic competency required of attorneys in Tennessee must be part of the discussion as we move forward in the midst of a pandemic that limits social interaction,” said Tennessee Supreme Court Chief Justice Jeff Bivins.

“The online remote testing option using NCBE materials is a wonderful option for our applicants and offers a legitimate assessment of competency. The materials from the NCBE have been pre-tested and are of the same quality as those used for the Uniform Bar Examination,” said Bill Harbison, President of the Board of Law Examiners. “Applicants who have begun their bar preparation and study may continue on course as the same subject matter and testing materials will be used for the assessment.”

Also, the Court ordered additional modifications to Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 7, section 11.03, extending the last day to withdraw a July 2020 application with a refund to September 1, 2020. It also modified sections 10.04 and 10.07, permitting practice under supervision or practice pending admission to continue until July 1, 2022, for July 2020 applicants.

A list of FAQs has been posted on the Board's website [here](#).

A copy of the order can be found [here](#).

###