

FILED

AUG 19 2020

CLERK SUPREME COURT

In the Iowa Supreme Court

**Request for Public Comment)
on Proposed Amendments to)
the Bar Examination Application)
Process, Chapter 31 of the)
Iowa Court Rules)**

Order

The Iowa Supreme Court is considering amendments to chapter 31 of the Iowa Court Rules based upon recommendations from the Iowa Board of Law Examiners. Prior to taking further action, the supreme court seeks public comment on the proposed amendments.

The proposed amendments would remove the requirement that law students must register with the Iowa Board of Law Examiners and pay associated registration fees if they intend to apply for admission to the bar of this state by examination. Those seeking to be admitted by bar examination would still be required to make application to take the bar examination pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 31.5 and pay the applicable fees under rule 31.6. While the bar exam application fee is technically raised for those applicants not previously admitted in another jurisdiction, the majority of applicants will not experience a net rise in application fees paid to the Iowa Board of Law Examiners. The amendments would also allow for the use of an electronic application process in seeking admission by bar examination or transferred Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) score. The proposed amendments include the following:

- **Rule 31.2.** The amendment would eliminate the requirement that law students must register with the Iowa Board of Law Examiners and pay a fee prior to January 15 of the year after the person commences the study of law in an accredited law school. It would likewise remove the subsequent deadlines and escalating fees for law student registration. Most applicants for the Iowa Bar Examination file their law student registrations at the same time as their bar exam application and pay the highest law student registration fee. Those individuals who already have a law student

registration on file with the Board of Law Examiners under the prior version of this rule would be charged a lower bar application fee than applicants who had not filed such law student registration in order to pay the same total law student registration fee and bar application fee as they had bargained for at the time of their prior law student registration filing.

- **Rule 31.4.** The amendment would permit the Iowa Board of Law Examiners to utilize an electronic application for admission by transferred UBE score and would require applicants to pay the processing fee for such application.
- **Rule 31.5.** The amendment would permit the Iowa Board of Law Examiners to utilize an electronic application for admission by examination.
- **Rule 31.6(1).** The amendment would require applicants to pay the processing fee for the electronic application proposed in Rule 31.5.
- **Rule 31.6(2).** The amendment would make the initial bar application fee paid for the Iowa bar examination by applicants not previously admitted in any other United States jurisdiction the same as those licensed in other United States jurisdictions. Previously, applicants who were not yet licensed in another jurisdiction paid a bar application fee lower than those licensed in another jurisdiction, but the not-yet-licensed applicants were also responsible for paying the law student registration fee provided for in Rule 31.2, which already-licensed attorneys were not subject to. The vast majority of applicants who are not previously admitted to practice law in any other United States jurisdiction end up paying the same total cost on their first attempt at the bar examination as those applicants who are already licensed in another jurisdiction due to the previously unlicensed applicants paying the highest law student registration fee along with their bar application fee.
- **Rule 31.6(3).** The amendment would preserve the same fee differential for those individuals who are unsuccessful on the Iowa bar examination and who apply to take the examination subsequent times. Applicants not previously admitted in another jurisdiction would pay the current reapplication fee of \$550 and applicants previously admitted in another jurisdiction would pay the current reapplication fee of \$800.

The proposed amendments to Iowa Court Rule chapter 31 are provided with this order and are available on the judicial branch website at

<https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/supreme-court/orders/>. In addition, copies of the proposed amendments are available at the office of the Clerk of the Iowa Supreme Court.

The supreme court's request for public comment does not imply that the court will adopt any proposed amendment without further consideration.

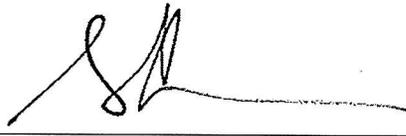
Any interested organization, agency, or person may submit written comments. Comments about a proposed rule amendment must refer to the specific rule number and line number (for example, rule 31.6(3), lines 21-25). Email comments must be sent to **rules.comments@iowacourts.gov**, state "**Bar Examination**" in the subject line of the email, and be sent **as an attachment to the email in Microsoft Word format**. Instead of submission by email, comments may be delivered in person or mailed to the Clerk of the Iowa Supreme Court, 1111 East Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, 50319.

Any comments received may be posted on the Iowa Judicial Branch website.

The deadline for submitting comments is 4:30 p.m. on October 19, 2020.

Dated this 19th day of August, 2020.

The Iowa Supreme Court

By 

Susan Larson Christensen Chief Justice

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