

Declining Passage Rates on the California Bar Exam: Possible Explanations and Impacts
An Informational Hearing of the Assembly Judiciary Committee

February 14, 2017
9:00 a.m. –12:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 447

I. Chair's Introduction

II. Overview of the California Bar Exam and the Recent Decline in Passage Rates [9:05 – 9:30 a.m.]

Panel 1: Administration of the California Bar Exam: A Summary of its Content, Format, and Grading, and What the Data Tells Us About Recent Performance Trends.

Witnesses: Karen Goodman (Chair, Committee of Bar Examiners, State Bar of CA)

Gayle Murphy (Senior Director of Admissions, State Bar of CA)

Roger Bolus, Ph.D. (Senior Partner, Research Solutions Group;
psychometric consultant to the State Bar)

Erica Moeser (President & CEO, National Conference of Bar Examiners)

Committee Member Questions

III. Possible Impacts of the Decline in Bar Passage Rates Upon Consumers and Different Sectors of the Legal Community [9:30 – 10:40 a.m.]

Panel 2: How Might the Decline of Bar Exam Passage Rates Impact the Legal Profession and Law Schools, Including With Respect to Accreditation?

Witnesses: Stephen Ferruolo (Dean, University of San Diego Law School)

Barry Currier (Managing Director, Accreditation and Legal Education,
American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Legal Education and
Admissions to the Bar)

Committee Member Questions

Panel 3: How Might the Decline of Bar Exam Passage Rates Impact Law Students, Legal Aid Providers, Consumers and the Public Interest?

Witnesses: Samuel Chang (ABA Law Student Division representative)

Salena Copeland (Executive Director, Legal Aid Association of California)

Ed Howard (Senior Counsel, Center for Public Interest Law)

Mitchel Winick (Dean, Monterey College of Law)

Committee Member Questions

IV. A Closer Look at the Purpose and Efficacy of the California Bar Exam in Light of Recent Performance Trends [10:40 – 11:40 a.m.]

Panel 4: What Purposes Should the Bar Exam Serve and How Well is it Currently Fulfilling Those Purposes? What Steps, If Any, Should Be Taken to Help Accomplish These Desired Purposes?

Witnesses: Gayle Murphy (Senior Director of Admissions, State Bar of CA)

Karen Goodman (Chair, Committee of Bar Examiners, State Bar of CA)

David Faigman (Chancellor & Dean, UC Hastings College of the Law)

Erica Moeser (President & CEO, National Conference of Bar Examiners)

James Schiavenza (Chairperson, Association of California Accredited Law Schools and Dean, Lincoln Law School of Sacramento)

Committee Member Questions

V. Public Comment [11:40 – 11:50 a.m.]

VI. Chair's Concluding Remarks