

June 25, 2003

Supreme Court of Florida
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1927

Re: Petition to Amend Rules 2-11.1 and 4-13.2 of the Rules of the Supreme Court
Relating to Admissions to the Bar

Petitioners: The Orange County Bar Association & Thomas B. Drage, Jr., Esq.
Case No: SC02-2354

Your Honors:

The purpose of this letter is to express my support for the Petitioners' petition proposing amendments to Rules 2-11.1 and 4-13.2 of the Rules of the Supreme Court Relating to Admissions to the Bar.

I have been a member of the Florida Bar since 1988, and my license number is 0766100. I am currently a Judge of Compensation Claims, hearing workers' compensation cases in Orlando. During my tenure, I have had the pleasure of meeting several students of the Barry University School of Law. Several of the students were paralegals in our community who made great financial and time sacrifices in order to obtain their law degrees while working full time. These are hard working and fine people. Some of the students are currently practicing law before me. Others, although equally qualified and deserving, are not. Although some of the students began law school together, some decided to delay their graduation due to the pending accreditation issues. Others were encouraged to graduate on time. Although all students received identical educations, the students who graduated on time were denied the opportunity to be members of the Bar, while the students who delayed graduation are currently practicing. This is not fair and can not be rationalized.

I closely followed the debacle that unfolded as Barry University School of Law attempted to gain accreditation through the ABA. The process was widely reported in the *Orlando Sentinel*. What seemed at first to be a reasonable process designed to insure the quality of the academic environment at Barry, instead deteriorated into an absurd predicament where students, after matriculating for several years, found themselves forced to graduate before school received provisional accreditation.

Whatever the situation was between Barry and the ABA, it seems patently unfair that the students pay the ultimate price for a delay in obtaining provisional accreditation. Let's face it - the school is now accredited and apparently thriving. I am all for changing the Supreme Court rules so they fit the accreditation process. How does a 12 month rule comport with a meaningful appeals process under the current ABA rules? The answer is, it doesn't.

I urge your Honors to change the rules in a manner that suites this Honorable Court and the honorable profession it regulates. Right the wrong that has been perpetrated against the 109 Barry students caught in this snafu. In the process, we will eliminate the possibility that this scenario will re-play itself as Florida's two newest schools undergo ABA scrutiny.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard S. Thompson
Judge of Compensation Claims
Orlando District

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing letter has been served on the attorney for the petitioners, Mathew D. Staver, Esquire, 210 Palmetto Avenue, Longwood, Florida 32750 by U.S. Mail this 25th day of June, 2003.

Richard S. Thompson