

July 9, 2003

Supreme Court of Florida
500 South Duval Street
Tallahassee, FL 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.; Case No: SC02-2354

Dear Chief Justice Anstead and Justices Wells, Pariente, Lewis, Quince, Cantero and Bell:

I strongly support the above-referenced petition. I have been a member of the Florida Bar since 1978. My Florida Bar number is 261734.

From 1991 to 2002, I served as County Attorney for Orange County, Florida. During that time, our office employed at least three Barry University law-school students as law clerks. All did an excellent job and were splendid examples of the high-quality education dispensed by Barry University School of Law.

Indeed, we offered a permanent job to one of the clerks. When she got caught in the ineligible-to-sit-for-the-bar-exam category, she stayed on as a paralegal and began – again – her law-school journey. While the taxpayers of Orange County are currently getting a bargain – an excellent lawyer for mere paralegal wages – the situation is extraordinarily harsh and burdensome on her and her family. It is utterly unfair. The existing rule needs to be changed.

As an aside, the worst part of the inequity is that those Barry students who proceeded through law school in a prompt, orderly fashion, without delays such as vacations, sabbaticals, or light course loads, are precisely the ones who got punished: they got ready for the exam too early – in some cases, only a matter of a few weeks too early. Those who went through law school at a more leisurely pace were rewarded and allowed to sit for the exam.

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In other words, the consequence of the current rule, however unintended, is to wreak injustice.

I respectfully urge the Court to change the rule. I leave to the Court's discretion the choice of which proposal to approve.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Wilkes

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing has been furnished by U.S. Mail to attorney for petitioners Mathew D. Staver, Esquire, 210 Palmetto Avenue, Longwood, Florida 32750 on this ____day of July, 2003.

Thomas J. Wilkes

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bcc: Thomas B. Drage, Jr., Orange County Attorney
Katherine "Katie" M. Lockett, Paralegal, Orange County Attorney's Office