

July 8, 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

Dear Justices,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for the above referenced petition. It is with great enthusiasm that I urge your support for the amendment, thereby changing the time available for a school to gain accreditation and help protect the pioneer students of new law schools from disaster.

My interest in this action is a personal one, as you may have guessed. A bit of history may help the Court understand my passion for this issue. I began working as a Deputy Sheriff for the Polk County Sheriff's Office in 1987. While working full time there, I began the study of law at the University of Orlando School of Law in the fall of 1996. I graduated Cum Laude from Barry University in June 2000, and with the consent of the Court, sat for the July 2000 Bar exam.

This endeavor was accomplished through the constant sacrifices of my wife, my children, my fellow employees, my personal finances and myself. We all made those sacrifices willingly to realize my goal of becoming a lawyer. I won't belabor you with the details, but it suffices to say that the price of the degree of Juris Doctor I received cannot be measured only in dollars, but in the blood, sweat and tears of human sacrifice.

After the Bar exam, I resigned my position as a Deputy Sheriff to begin working as a legal assistant with my father-in-law, Jack T. Edmund, a solo practitioner. Having been a practicing trial lawyer for some forty plus years, he was ecstatic about the prospect of his son-in-law coming on board with him. He not only needed the help, but had a vision of being able to slow down at 75 years of age, and then to ultimately form a partnership with me as soon as my bar card came through. As you know, that has yet to pass. Unfortunately for all of us, on March 7, 2002, while coming home from a Federal trial in Tampa, Jack was killed in an automobile accident. Some 2,000 to 3,000 people attended the services in Bartow. Though I would never trade the year and a half I was privileged to work with him; our dream of a partnership can now never be. That loss, in and of itself cannot be measured.

I now find myself back in law school taking the same courses, from the same professors, using the same texts books -- and it simply makes no sense at all. My classmates and I did everything we were supposed to do. We drove from all over the state to attend classes. We invested countless hours of time studying. We missed out on recitals and parent/teacher meetings and ball games and dinners at home and tucking our children in at night to follow our dreams --

only to have the rug pulled out from under our feet time after time. This is just not supposed to happen in America.

You have the collective power to prevent it from happening again to others, and to hopefully correct what happened to us, without diluting the quality of law school graduates. With the precedent that our plight set, it would indeed be a leap of faith for a prospective law student to enroll in a new law school prior to its gaining accreditation. Why would anyone take that chance? It would be foolish indeed. We are for the most part all citizens of Florida and we want to practice in Florida. I myself am a forth-generation Floridian, my great-grandparents having homesteaded in Bartow, where the majority of my family and I still live. We are not coming to you from other states or countries. You are OUR Court and we look to you to use your wisdom and experience to help right this wrong.

I could write on for volumes about our personal experiences as well as the Petition itself and the proposed changes, but won't. I keep my letter brief in hopes that it will be read and at least considered by the Court. I have also sat virtually silent while my fate is decided for me and I could not stand the taste of that any longer.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be heard on this issue. Please give your utmost consideration to the pending petition and implement the proposed change in the procedure giving schools 36 months to navigate through the minefield that is the ABA accreditation process.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark A. Taylor, J.D.

Certificate of Service

I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing has been furnished by US Mail to the attorney for the petitioners, Mathew D. Staver, Esquire, 210 Palmetto Avenue, Longwood, Florida 32750, on this 8th day of July, 2003.

Mark A. Taylor, J.D.