

ECHEVARRIA & ASSOCIATES, P.A.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

9119 CORPORATE LAKE DRIVE, SUITE 300
TAMPA, FLORIDA 33634

NICHOLE ALVAREZ-SOWLES
PEGGY MC NEW BALLWEG
ROBERT KLIEN BOWEN, III
MARK A. BRODERICK
DEBORAH CAVENTER
ANNE M. CORDELL
ERIN COLLINS CULLARO
MICHAEL J. ECHEVARRIA
ANDREW L. FIVECOAT
PATRICK J. HALPIN
ANTHONY A. HAYDEN
SAMANTHA LEIGH HENDRICKS
CHRISTINE L. HERENDEEN
BRUCE R. INSANA
JENNIFER D. LOWREY
JUANITA S. RODRIGUEZ
RONALD R. WOLFE

Telephone (813) 251-4766
Telefax (813) 251-1541
Please reply to:
Post Office Box 25018
Tampa, FL 33622-5018

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

Your Honors:

My name is Michael J. Echevarria. I have been a member of the Florida Bar for twenty (20) years. My Bar number is 362344. I am writing to you to express my support for the above-referenced petition.

I understand that the current rules relating to bar admissions are in place to ensure that law school graduates taking the bar exam have graduated from an academically proven law school. Although I agree it is of utmost importance to set high standards of education for law schools, I also think it is important to modify the rules of accreditation when the process changes significantly. It is my understanding that in 1999 the ABA began changing its accreditation process. Specifically, Florida's rules relating to the definition of "accredited" and "educationally qualified" have not changed substantially since the early 1970's. As a result, Barry University School of Law's first three graduating classes were denied access to the FL Bar.

Additionally, I understand that Florida has recently gained two new law schools, FAMU and FIU. I am hopeful that this Court will modify the 12-month rule to protect students currently embarking on a legal education at new schools. Students who seek to

Supreme Court of Florida
PAGE TWO
July 8, 2003

enter this honorable profession should not be categorically excluded because the archaic rule does not comport with the ABA accreditation process.

I request that this Court adopt and implement one of the proposals submitted by petitioners so that the 12-month rule is modified to reflect the current ABA accreditation process.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mje', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael J. Echevarria

MJE:bgj