

3.2 Recommendation to the Board of Trustees Related to Extend the Previously Approved Fee Waiver for the July 2025 Bar Exam to Apply to the July 2025, February 2026, or July 2026 Bar Exam



The State Bar of California

OPEN SESSION

AGENDA ITEM

3.2 MAY 2025

COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS

DATE: May 5, 2025

TO: Members, Committee of Bar Examiners

FROM: Audrey Ching, Program Director, Admissions Division

SUBJECT: Recommendation to the Board of Trustees Related to Extend the Previously Approved Fee Waiver for the July 2025 Bar Exam to Apply to the July 2025, February 2026, or July 2026 Bar Exam

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Trustees, at its February 21, 2025, meeting, approved offering a fee waiver for the July 2025 Bar Exam to applicants who withdrew from or are unsuccessful on the February 2025 Bar Exam.

At its April 18, 2025, meeting, the chair of the Committee of Bar Examiners mentioned that the committee would be asked to extend the waiver so that applicants could take advantage of it if they did not sit for another bar exam until February or July 2026. If approved, the waiver would be valid for one use, but could be applied to the July 2025, February 2026, or July 2026 bar exams.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends that the committee request that the Board extend the existing waiver for applicants who failed or withdrew from the February 2025 Bar Exam so that it applies to the next three examination cycles: July 2025, February 2026, and July 2026. If approved by the Board, the amended fee waiver would take effect immediately.

DISCUSSION

At its meeting on February 21, 2025, the Board approved a fee waiver for the July 2025 Bar Exam for applicants who withdrew from or were unsuccessful on the February 2025 Bar Exam. Before opening the application for the July exam, staff worked with the Office of Information Technology to implement changes to the Admissions Information Management System (AIMS) to allow these applicants to apply without submitting a fee. The fee waiver was applied to 1,460 applicants who

withdrew from the February 2025 Bar Exam. As of April 25, 2025, 940 of these applicants have applied for the July 2025 Bar Exam. When the results of the February 2025 exam are released, the same approach will be used to allow those who were unsuccessful to apply for the July 2025 exam without submitting a fee.

The July 2025 Bar Exam will only be administered in person in California. In contrast, applicants had the option to take the February 2025 Bar Exam remotely or in person at some locations outside of California. Staff have received several requests from applicants to apply the fee waiver to a subsequent administration of the bar exam; the committee and the Board have received public comments with similar requests. Applicants have cited various reasons for this, including but not limited to: inability to travel to or take time off for the July exam, inability to study before the July exam, existing obligations for July, and an inability to take the exam due to military assignments.

Since the fee waiver was provided as a remedy for the unacceptable experience faced with the February exam, staff believe it would be most equitable and favorable to applicants to allow them to choose to apply the waiver to one of three administrations of the exam, the July 2025, February 2026, or July 2026 administration. It is also recommended that applicants who have already applied for the July 2025 Bar Exam with the fee waiver be allowed to (1) withdraw from the exam before the final filing deadline of June 2, 2025, and (2) apply the fee waiver to one of the 2026 administrations of the bar exam.

PREVIOUS ACTION

The Board approved the waiver at its meeting on February 21, 2025. The minutes will be posted to the agenda for the Board's May 22–23, 2025 meeting.

FISCAL/PERSONNEL IMPACT

The 2025 fees for the California Bar Exam are listed below:

| | Exam Fee | Late Fee 1 | Late Fee 2 | Laptop Fee |
|--------------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|
| General Applicant | \$850 | \$50 | \$250 | \$153 |
| Attorney Applicant | \$1,500 | \$50 | \$250 | \$153 |

Staff identified 1,460 applicants eligible for the waiver after withdrawing from the February exam. The number of applicants eligible for the waiver due to being unsuccessful on the February 2025 exam is currently unknown.

The revenue lost for each general applicant who utilizes the waiver ranges between \$850 and \$1,253, and it ranges between \$1,500 and \$1,903 for each attorney applicant. Regardless, staff firmly believes that qualifying applicants should be granted the opportunity to utilize the waiver for one of the exams in 2026.

Since the Office of Information Technology has already developed the processes to allow eligible

applicants who register for the exam without paying these fees, minimal effort will be needed from both IT and Admissions staff to apply the waiver to the 2026 administrations of the bar exam.

AMENDMENTS TO RULES

None

AMENDMENTS TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES POLICY MANUAL

None

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

None – core business operations

RESOLUTIONS

Should the Committee of Bar Examiners concur, it is:

RESOLVED, that the Committee of Bar Examiners recommends that the Board of Trustees extend the existing fee waiver for applicants who were unsuccessful on or withdrew from the February 2025 California Bar Exam to allow them to use the waiver for the July 2025, February 2026 or July 2026 administration; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that applicants who have already applied for the July 2025 bar exam with the fee waiver be allowed to withdraw from the exam before the final filing deadline of June 2, 2025, and apply the fee waiver to one of the 2026 administrations of the bar exam.

ATTACHMENTS

None