Supreme Court

In re Article II of the Supreme Court Rules :
(Further Response to COVID-19 - February :
2021 Rhode Island Bar Examination) :

O R D E R

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create significant obstacles for both applicants and bar admissions staff related to the administration of a bar examination. The Court remains mindful of the need of individuals to be admitted to the bar as soon as possible and of our duty to protect the public by ensuring that persons licensed to practice law in Rhode Island are competent and possess the requisite character and fitness. The health and safety of applicants and staff has remained paramount throughout the Court's consideration of how to proceed with yet another bar examination during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

While the future remains uncertain, the virus is trending in the wrong direction across the country and the world, and Rhode Island finds itself in the worst place thus far during the pandemic. As a result, the Governor has instituted new restrictions and without a significant reduction in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations, the restrictions will continue and any plans to administer an in-person bar examination would remain uncertain.

Recognizing the challenges presented by COVID-19, the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) has announced plans to make the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) available to jurisdictions remotely for February 2021. The remote examination will include a full complement of UBE test materials and will be offered on the dates previously set for the February examination – the last Tuesday and Wednesday of the month. The NCBE will calculate scores and provide score transfer services for the remote UBE.

In light of this development and the uncertainty that will continue in the coming months, the Board of Bar Examiners has recommended to the Court that Rhode Island administer the February 2021 Rhode Island bar examination remotely. The Board recognized that plans to administer the upcoming bar examination in-person would be at risk of cancellation and jeopardize its goal of providing all applicants with an opportunity to sit for the bar examination in Rhode Island.

The Court agrees and adopts the recommendation of the Board. Accordingly, the Court orders as follows:

> The February 2021 Rhode Island Bar Examination will be administered remotely.
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> Scores earned on a remote administration of the UBE in February 2021 are transferable to Rhode Island consistent with Court Rules.
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> Participation in the remote examination is contingent upon compliance with all protocols for the remote examination as set by the Court.
>
> Pending applicants who do not wish to sit for a remote administration of the bar examination may elect to defer to the July 2021 Rhode Island Bar Examination at no cost or to receive a full refund of the petition filing fee.
>
> All other previously imposed filing requirements and deadlines remain in effect.

Entered as an Order of this Court this ***30th*** day of ***November 2020***.

/s/

Suttell, C. J.

/s/

Goldberg, J.

/s/

Flaherty, J.

/s/

Robinson, J.