



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

John Nevin, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

CONTACT (517) 373-0129 TWITTER @CourtInfo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan Board of Law Examiners to Implement Improved Scoring System

LANSING, MI, July 9, 2014 – The Michigan Board of Law Examiners (BLE) is responsible for protecting the public by ensuring that law school graduates who pass the bar examination demonstrate the minimum level of competency necessary for admission to the bar. To this end, beginning with the upcoming administration of the bar exam on July 29th, an improved scoring system for the essay portion of the exam will be implemented that more accurately measures competence by:

- ensuring that essay test scores across administrations reflect the same skill level; and,
- continuing to reflect differences in the difficulty between the multiple choice and essay portions of the exam.

“A passing score should mean the same whether comparing one year to the next or the February and July administrations of the test,” said BLE President Gerald M. Marcinkoski.

The improved scoring method for the essay portion of the test was adopted by the BLE based on the analysis and recommendations of one of the nation’s leading experts in the scoring of high stakes tests. Favorably received by the deans of Michigan’s law schools, the new method establishes a common scale that to the extent possible accounts for differences in difficulty across administrations, while making sure the applicant scores accurately reflect their competence on both the multi-state and Michigan portions of the exam. “The improved scoring system achieves both objectives to the greatest extent possible,” Marcinkoski said.

The Michigan Bar Examination has two components: the 200-question multiple-choice Multistate Bar Examination, constructed and scored by the National Conference of Bar Examiners; and an essay examination, prepared and scored by (or under the supervision of) the BLE, with 15 questions from a possible 26 subjects. The examinee’s scores for each of the two components of the examination are combined into a single composite score. If this score is equal to or exceeds 135, the applicant passes the Michigan Bar Examination. The Multistate Bar Examination tests black letter law principles common to many jurisdictions. Only the essay examination is designed to test Michigan substantive and procedural law.

The BLE was created by the Legislature to oversee the investigation and examination of persons who apply for admission to the State Bar. The office administers the Michigan Bar Examination twice a year, in February and July, and then releases the exam results. Board members are nominated by the Supreme Court and appointed by the governor for five year terms.

—MSC for the Board of Law Examiners—