

TX Supreme Court Reclaims Authority Over Law-School Approval; Nelson A. Locke's Landmark Challenge Helped Pave the Way

Texas Supreme Court reclaims law-school approval from private accreditors, centering outcomes and portability. Nelson A. Locke's case spurred reform statewide.

PLANO, TX, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Texas attorney [Nelson A.](#)

“

I didn't fight only for myself, I fought for every capable, ethical lawyer who chose a modern path to legal education. Texas will now be measuring what counts not the delivery format of a classroom.”

Nelson A. Locke

[Locke](#) today welcomed the Supreme Court of Texas's tentative opinion regarding preliminary approval of amendments to Rule 1 (Bar Admissions) (25-9070) that will shift approval of qualifying law schools from a private accreditor (the ABA) back to the Supreme Court. Locke—whose multiyear challenge to Texas's blanket exclusion of online law-school graduates culminated in a 2025 Texas Supreme Court order in his favor—said the change “finally aligns Texas licensure with common-sense, outcome-based standards.”

“For years, a bright-line ban kept qualified lawyers out of

Texas simply because they studied online—even when they'd passed some of the toughest bar exams in the country and successfully built real practices serving clients nationwide,” said Locke. “The Texas Supreme Court's action when finalized will restore accountability where it belongs and focuses on what actually matters: the candidate's competence, character, and results.”

Locke's Road to Reform

- A seasoned professional turned lawyer. Prior to beginning his professional career, Locke served as a United States Marine. Then, after 23 years in retail leadership, and another 23 years building a national mortgage-compliance company (including a public listing), Locke enrolled in Concord Law School (now [Purdue Global Law School](#)) in 2005 as a working adult. He graduated in 2011 and passed the California Bar in 2013. At that time, he was 63 years old.

- Texas said “no” to online JDs. Relocating to Plano, Texas in 2014, Locke built a federal mortgage-compliance law practice serving clients in 26 states. When he applied for Texas licensure, the Texas Board of Law Examiners (TBLE) twice rejected him (2021 and 2023), repeatedly shifting

rationales—from categorical objections to online education, to debates about whether his work was “exclusively federal,” and even penalizing him for still representing California clients remotely despite his California admission and bar license.

- Taking it to the top. In 2025, after years of hearings and submissions (including affidavits from legal scholars and deans), Locke filed a Petition for Administrative Review—and, in the alternative, a writ of mandamus—asking the Supreme Court of Texas to address the TBLE’s inconsistent application of existing rules, and to judge his qualifications on the merits.

- A decisive turn. On May 6, 2025, the Court issued an order (25-9024) recognizing Locke’s record, agreeing that he had showed good cause for admission to the Texas Bar, and directing the TBLE to take a path to admit him - effectively rejecting the idea that “online” alone or non-ABA status of a law school could bar qualified attorneys from Texas. Partly because of his case, the Texas Supreme Court later opened public comment on broader rule changes, leading to this month’s preliminary approval restoring the Court’s direct oversight of the process and of law school admission.

“I didn’t fight only for myself,” Locke said. “I fought for every capable, ethical lawyer who chose a modern path to legal education, passed a rigorous bar, and serves clients well. Texas will now be measuring what counts—performance and professionalism—not the delivery format of a classroom.”

Why the Rule Shift Matters

Texas accountability. The Court, not a private body (the ABA), will now maintain the Texas-approved list of law schools using simple, objective, ideologically neutral criteria—centered on outcomes such as bar-pass performance.

Portability protected. The framework is designed to preserve interstate portability and avoid new burdens on currently approved schools, while allowing fair consideration of non-traditional programs that meet Texas revised standards.

Pathways for talent. Experienced attorneys with demonstrable competence—like Locke—gain a clearer, fairer route to Texas licensure, improving consumer access to specialized legal expertise (e.g., federal mortgage-compliance).

A Texan Focused on Consumers and the Future Bar

Locke plans to expand his compliance practice to help Texas mortgage companies meet high-integrity standards that protect consumers. He also intends to advise students and attorneys with non-traditional legal education pathways as they navigate admissions in Texas and beyond.

"If you graduates can pass a state bar, and you lawyers can serve clients well, Texas should welcome you and your law school" Locke said. "That's the standard I live by - performance - and the standard this reform advances."

Public Comment & Next Steps

The Supreme Court of Texas has invited written comments on the proposed amendments, due by December 1st, 2025. Finalization of changes is anticipated after the comment period. The Court has indicated an effective date of January 1, 2026 for the amendments.

About Nelson Locke

Nelson Locke is a Texas-based attorney focused on federal mortgage-compliance and consumer protection. A 2011 graduate of Concord/Purdue Global Law School and a member of the California and Texas Bars, Locke maintains a multistate practice advising lenders and brokers on regulatory compliance. His successful 2025 challenge before the Supreme Court of Texas helped catalyze statewide admissions reform that emphasizes outcomes over educational format.

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