

TX Supreme Court Reasserts Authority Over Law-School Approval for Bar Admission, Ending Automatic Reliance on ABA

Landmark rule change follows years of public debate—and highlights the real-world impact of attorney Nelson A. Locke's challenge to Texas' admissions framework

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, January 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dallas, Texas (January 14, 2026) — [Nelson A. Locke, Esq.](#), a [Purdue Global Law School](#)



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Nelson A. Locke

graduate licensed to practice in Texas and California - today praised the Supreme Court of Texas for finalizing amendments to the Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas that reassert the Court’s authority to approve law schools for purposes of bar admission—ending Texas’ long-standing practice of tying eligibility exclusively to American Bar Association (ABA) accreditation.

On January 6, 2026, the Court issued Misc. Docket No. 26-

9002, granting final approval to amendments to Rule 1 and publishing an initial list of “Approved Law Schools” approved by the Court as satisfying Texas’ law study requirements. The order states the amendments are effective immediately.

“The Texas Supreme Court deserves credit for doing what a state’s highest court is supposed to do: safeguard the public, preserve confidence in the profession, and keep critical licensing decisions accountable to Texans,” said Locke. “This action recognizes that quality and competence can be measured through objective criteria, not dictated by a single private accreditor.”

A Statewide Policy Shift Anchored in Objective Criteria

In its order, the Court notes it first invited public comment on April 4, 2025 regarding whether to reduce or end the Rules’ reliance on the ABA, then issued a further request for comment alongside proposed amendments on September 26, 2025. The Court emphasized its intent to provide “stability, certainty, and flexibility” for currently approved schools and referenced “simple, objective, and ideologically neutral” criteria, including reliance on limited existing ABA standards as metrics for ongoing approval. The Court implied that changes to Texas’s law school approval processes would be more open minded than in the past and that changes made would

not make the process more onerous. The Texas Board of Law Examiners has been tasked with these assignments.

Reuters has reported Texas is the first U.S. state to formally end reliance on ABA accreditation in this manner, creating a Texas-controlled list of approved law schools while aiming to preserve the portability of law degrees across states.

Locke's Challenge Spotlighted the Stakes for Experienced, Nontraditional Attorneys
Locke's public advocacy and legal challenge underscored the real-world consequences of rules that treat ABA accreditation as the single gatekeeper for licensure. Locke is a veteran and compliance expert whose practice has focused on mortgage compliance and regulatory support for lenders and brokers nationwide.

His path to practice included completing his J.D. through Purdue Global Law School (formerly Concord Law School), an online program, and passing two required California Bar Exams before serving clients.

After relocating to Texas, Locke was denied admission to the Texas Bar based on the Texas rule requiring graduation from an ABA-accredited law school, which largely ruled out on-line education, despite his years of practice and professional record, prompting him and his legal team to pursue an uncommon route to get the issue in front of the state's highest court.

As Locke has described publicly, the legal strategy included a petition for administrative review and, alternatively, a writ of mandamus to prompt Texas Supreme Court review.

Locke has said the Court issued an order dated May 6, 2025 after reviewing the record presented, among other considerations.

Why This Matters

The Texas Supreme Court's January 2026 amendments mark a significant policy development for legal education and attorney mobility. The Court states it intends to preserve portability of Texas degrees to other states and out-of-state degrees into Texas, and that it does not anticipate immediate changes to the current list of approved law schools.

Locke said the shift reflects a broader modernization of how legal competence can be assessed for qualified professionals, especially those who pursue nontraditional legal education pathways while building careers, serving clients, and demonstrating competence through bar passage and practice.

About Nelson A. Locke

Nelson A. Locke, Esq. is a licensed attorney and compliance-focused practitioner with a background serving regulated industries and advising on legal and regulatory matters. He has publicly advocated for modern, evidence-based pathways to licensure that prioritize

competence, ethics, and consumer protection. At present he welcomes inquiries regarding how he may assist on-line law school graduates when applying for a Bar admission. He may be reached at nl@lockelaw.us. His firm's web site address is www.lockelaw.us

Attorney Locke is a member of the California Bar (293842) and the Texas Bar (24147328). His principal office is in Plano, Texas 75024.

Sherry Sutton

Sherry Sutton, Your Marketing Mentor

+ +1 512-632-1689

sherry@sherrysutton.com

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