

Florida and Ohio Momentum Reflects a Larger Shift Sparked by Texas's American Bar Association (ABA) Break

Nelson A. Locke: The Bar-Admission Fight That Helped Put the Issue in Motion

DALLAS, TX, UNITED STATES, January 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Nelson A. Locke](#), a [Purdue Global Law School](#) graduate and Texas-admitted attorney who spent years challenging what he

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describes as ABA-driven barriers to bar admission for experienced, state-accredited online-law graduates, today issued a statement after Governor Ron DeSantis urged the Florida Supreme Court to “do the exact same thing” Texas did and move law school approval under the state high court’s authority.

At a press conference on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, DeSantis said: “The Texas Supreme Court said the law schools are going to be accredited by the Supreme Court

of Texas... They should do the exact same thing that Texas did.”

Locke said the Florida comments, and Ohio’s parallel review, are best understood as the next steps in a national reexamination that accelerated after Texas’ rule change and the high-profile bar-admission disputes that preceded it.

“People should understand why I’m commenting: I’m not watching this from the sidelines,” Locke said. “I lived what happens when a system treats one private accreditation label as a hard stop regardless of experience, ethics, or actual competence. Texas forced the conversation into the open. Now other states are deciding what accountability looks like in their own rules.”

The timeline: Locke’s bar fight, Texas’ rule change, then Florida and Ohio move
Locke’s dispute with the Texas bar-admissions framework centered on one core issue: Texas’ rules historically treated ABA accreditation as the default gatekeeper for eligibility despite growing nontraditional pathways, working professionals, and online legal education.

In June 2025, Locke publicly described pursuing a unique legal mechanism to get his case before the Texas Supreme Court: a petition for administrative review and, alternatively, a writ of

mandamus. He stated that effort led to an order dated May 6, 2025, after the Court reviewed his record and practice.

Locke's broader argument was that competence can be demonstrated through outcomes and professional history, including passing multiple Bar Exams in California, and maintaining a clean record while practicing in a regulated, compliance-heavy field.

Then, on January 6, 2026, the Supreme Court of Texas issued Misc. Docket No. 26-9002, finalizing amendments to the Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Texas and publishing an initial list of law schools approved by the Court as satisfying Texas' law study requirement. The order revises the definition of "Approved law school" to reflect approval by the Supreme Court of Texas, formalizing the Court's role in maintaining the list going forward.

In a first-person account, Locke has said his case, and the resulting Supreme Court review, was likely helpful in convincing the Court in making the decision to revise the rule entirely, leading to a framework where ABA accreditation is no longer the sole gatekeeper in Texas.

Why Florida's January 7 remarks matter now

Florida has already been studying alternatives on a defined schedule.

On March 12, 2025, the Florida Supreme Court established a workgroup (Administrative Order No. AOSC25-15) to propose alternatives to Florida's current framework, including options that would end reliance on the ABA.

On October 27, 2025, the workgroup issued its Final Report, noting it had not yet been considered or acted upon by the Supreme Court of Florida.

The report lays out multiple paths within the Court's authority, such as authorizing court approval of law schools, establishing essential standards, or creating a state-accreditation system, along with options requiring coordination with other entities.

Locke said DeSantis' January 7 comments land at a moment when Florida already has a full menu of vetted options in hand.

Ohio's parallel track: formal review already underway

Ohio has also moved from debate to structure. The Supreme Court of Ohio announced on July 17, 2025 the creation of a Law School Accreditation Advisory Committee to evaluate and review accreditation standards and procedures for Ohio's law schools, with an emphasis on identifying potential opportunities for innovation.

Locke: reforms must be measurable, bias neutral, and built for public protection

Locke stressed that his position is not about lowering standards, but about ensuring standards measure what actually matters—competence, ethics, accountability, and consumer protection rather than outsourcing a state-licensing gate to a single private accreditor.

“States can modernize responsibly,” Locke said. “That means transparent criteria, real oversight, and rules that evaluate outcomes. Texas has put a new structure in place. Florida has the roadmap. Ohio has opened a formal review. The question now is whether these states will build systems that are rigorous and fair, without the problematic protocol that resulted in unfair and inconsistent decisions in the past.”

About Nelson A. Locke

Nelson A. Locke is a Purdue Global Law School graduate, and a Texas and California admitted attorney and compliance professional whose practice focuses on mortgage regulatory compliance and related legal services. Attorney Locke is a member of the California Bar (293842) and the Texas Bar (24147328). His principal office is in Plano, Texas 75024. At present he welcomes inquiries regarding how he may assist on-line law school graduates with applying for Bar admission.

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