

As administrator of Florida's nation leading legal certification program, the Board of Legal Specialization & Education (BLSE), meets frequently to consider improvements to our program to enhance the experience of Florida's board certified lawyers. We provide the following report to bring you up-to-date on issues that the BLSE reviewed at its September 14, 2018 meeting.

I. APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATION AND RECERTIFICATION

a. BLSE approved applications for certification and recertification that were recommended by the area certification committees. We congratulate all who achieved or maintained their certification status!!

II. REVIEW OF CERTIFICATION AREAS

a. The BLSE approved a mandate to be sent to certain area committees to phase out and eliminate subspecialties in certification examinations. A mandate will be issued to four area committees (Tax, Intellectual Property, International Law, and Juvenile Law) that currently test for subspecialty areas. The mandate will direct that the subspecialty approach be eliminated for the 2020 exam cycle. The mandate is aligned with the overall objective of the BLSE to certify lawyers having the requisite knowledge that matches the subject matter of a given certification area as opposed to certifying lawyers that have a narrow specialty area within a certification area.

b. The BLSE reviewed the 2018 May Post Exam Survey completed by applicants that recently took the May Board Certification Examination. All BLSE Liaisons will be reviewing the findings with their respective area committees. The goal of this outreach is to improve the examination.

c. The BLSE approved the newly revised State and Federal Government and Administrative Law ("SFGAP") examination specifications.

III. RULES AND POLICIES

a. BLSE continued its discussion about a proposed change to policies regarding the manner and timing of notice to applicants who have filed a grade review petition. The BLSE previously approved in concept the opportunity for a Grade Review Petitioner to appear before the BLSE. A proposed policy revision (BLSE Policy 2.13(f)) was drafted and presented for consideration by the BLSE. Based upon input from BLSE members, the Policy will be further revised for consideration at the next BLSE Meeting in November, 2018.

b. The BLSE approved support to clarify Rules 6-3.5(c) (1) and 6.3.7(b) 1. The proposed clarification of the current language provides an exemption for those serving as judges. The clarification allows judges to maintain their board certification status while serving in a judicial capacity.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

a. BLSE continued its discussion about creating a program in which certified lawyers can be contacted by a legal aid organization seeking consultation, on a pro bono basis, in the certified lawyer's area of expertise. The program is tentatively called "Certified Lawyers on Call," or "CLOC." At this point, in excess of 100 certified members responded to an email expressing an interest in participating in this program. The fiscal impact of starting a new program or alternatively, tying it to Lawyers Advising Lawyers ("LAL") was discussed. Prior to making a decision whether to be a stand- alone or joint program, former BLSE Chair Steve Rubin agreed to coordinate a pilot program to gauge actual interest in the program before the BLSE considers whether to fund the CLOC Program as a stand-alone project or tied to LAL. The BLSE voted to proceed with Steve Rubin coordinating the pilot program.

b. The "Results of the 2018 Board Certified Member Survey" was disseminated and discussed. The survey data identified certain areas that require improvement as well as those areas where members expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction with the certification program. The Communications Subcommittee will work with Florida Bar Communications Coordinator Arlee Coleman to develop an action plan to address concerns expressed by board certified lawyers. The Communications Subcommittee will focus on ways educating the public as to the meaning of being board certified along with an efficient process to locate a board certified specialist for those seeking representation. The BLSE also discussed the use of outdoor advertising such as billboards as an effective tool to advertise board certification. Presently a proposed billboard is being developed for approval by the BLSE at its November 15, 2018 Meeting.

IV. UPCOMING EVENTS

a. The next BLSE meeting will be held on November 16, 2018 at the Tampa Airport Marriott.