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Issue 143 | February 12

Musings on the Many Models of Mandatory Bars

One Year Later: A Look at the State Bar of California and California Lawyers Association

It's now been about a year since a closely followed split in California, when the State Bar of California shed most of its duties other than its regulatory role, and the California Lawyers Association was launched to handle sections and other traditional bar entities and activities. [ABA Journal](#) assesses how the two organizations are doing now and takes a look back at what led to this big change. Also, a "who's who" of executives from other bars share their thoughts on this restructuring and on the state of mandatory bars in general.

Overworked Public Defenders: A Constitutional Crisis?

The U.S. Constitution states that every indigent defendant in a criminal case must have a lawyer. But it offers no guarantees that this lawyer will have enough time to do an adequate job with their case. A recent study by the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants looked at the untenable workload for public defenders in Louisiana in particular, where one public defender had 413 felony clients at one time. [The New York Times](#) highlights some of the findings from this study, talks to former public defenders in two states about the harsh realities and consequences of their working conditions, and looks at current efforts to gather more data and bring further attention to this nationwide problem.

Nonprofit Legal Groups, Former Judges Object to High Fees for PACER System

When PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records) launched in the 1990s, it was a technological marvel and a great time saver for those needing records pertaining to federal court cases. The problem, many users say, is that this online system hasn't evolved much since then—and on top of its clunkiness, it's also expensive to use. In 2016, the National Veterans Legal Services Program, the National Consumer Law Center, and Alliance for Justice filed a class action lawsuit (backed by former Senator Joe Lieberman) against the federal government to challenge PACER's fee structure. In January, a group of former federal jurists went even further, contending in a friend-of-the-court brief that PACER should be entirely free to use. Find out more about the lawsuit and other efforts to change PACER at [The New Republic](#).

As Law Firms Ease Retirement Age Policies, What Does It Mean for Younger Lawyers?

Naturally enough, there's often a generational divide in lawyers' opinions of mandatory retirement age policies: Many older lawyers resent being told to leave while they are still able to work and contribute, whereas many younger lawyers feel unable to advance while so many senior lawyers are still around. In general, according to [New York Law Journal](#), mandatory retirement age policies are on the decline—and even those firms that do still have them often make exceptions. Are senior lawyers impeding younger lawyers by staying at the firm, or are they helping by continuing to bring in business?



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