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Utah State Bar Sued over Mandatory Fees

Attorney Sues Mandatory Utah State Bar, Citing First and Fourteenth Amendments

Last week, the Utah State Bar joined the list of bars facing lawsuits over their use of mandatory dues or member fees. In her federal lawsuit, attorney Amy Pomeroy claims that the bar violated both her First Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment rights by using member dues to support ideological views with which she disagrees. Over the past year, the bar has taken a position on a number of issues, including a proposed legal services tax and the idea that courtrooms should be a "safe space." Pomeroy contends that the bar's efforts to make rebates available for members who dissent do not go far enough and are not well publicized enough. "The obligation of lawyers to serve and improve our legal system is best achieved through our current structure," wrote Utah State Bar President Heather Farnsworth in a statement about this lawsuit, "and we will defend it as the best system to meet our obligations to the public and the judiciary while also protecting the constitutional rights of lawyers." What does the lawsuit ask for, specifically, and what other recent bar activities and positions does Pomeroy say go against her beliefs? [Courthouse News Service](#) has more details; Farnsworth's full statement is available [on the bar's website](#).

Student Loan Forgiveness: How Likely Is It, and What Might Limit Lawyers' Eligibility?

Both before and after the most recent presidential election, there's been a lot of talk about student loan forgiveness. But how likely is it that it will actually happen? and will there be certain limitations that prevent a lot of law school debt from being forgiven? President Joe Biden is currently mulling a plan to forgive all or some student loan debt, but it may exclude those who owe private lenders, and there may also be limits based on income. If it's determined that the president doesn't have the executive authority to forgive student loan debt, its prospects in Congress seem uncertain, one expert says. [ABA Journal](#) looks at several possibilities currently being discussed, and also at how the ABA and its Young Lawyers Division are involved.

Even After COVID-19 Ends, Zoom Court May Still Be in Session

Just as the COVID-19 pandemic may have brought permanent changes to the bar workplace and the legal workplace, it may also have forever changed the way courts operate. Whether that's positive, negative, or both depends in part on whom you ask, and on the type of proceeding being discussed. For example, the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators jointly endorsed a set of principles that said many court processes should remain online even after the threat of infection has passed, and many note that the technology gap has been nowhere near as wide as was feared. However, many prosecutors and defenders alike say that jury selection and trials themselves suffer without physical presence. [The Atlantic](#) provides a comprehensive view of what has been called Zoom court or virtual justice? and at whether it's here to stay.

Two New Guides from IAALS Aim to Increase Lawyer

Preparedness, Decrease Bias in Hiring

How can legal educators and legal employers move beyond good intentions when it comes to preparing new lawyers for practice and increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the profession? IAALS (the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System) has two new resources that can help: the Foundations Instructional Design Guide and the Foundations Hiring Guide. The guides are based on IAALS' Foundations for Practice. Launched in 2014, this research was aimed at determining what characteristics, competencies, and skills are essential for new lawyers, so law schools could adjust their curricula accordingly and so law firms could hire based on something other than the candidate's law school and class rank. Now, IAALS says, the new guides offer data-driven, practical steps for law schools and law firms. To learn more and to read or download the guides, visit [IAALS Blog](#).

ABA President Patricia Lee Refo: Voting Rights, Voter Participation Essential to Rule of Law

Earlier this week, ABA President Patricia Lee Refo issued a statement on the subject of voting rights, and the need for federal and state governments to take steps to maximize public participation. "The ABA supports absentee voting for all registered voters, regardless of reason, with clear and understandable voting procedures and instructions to facilitate such voting," Refo wrote. "In states and localities with early voting, the ABA supports specific guidelines that ensure an adequate number of polling places, adequate notice of polling hours and locations, enough time for early voting and no announcement of results until polls close on Election Day." The full text of Refo's statement is [on the ABA website](#).



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