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Ohio Considers Eliminating Mental Health from Character & Fitness Assessment

Supreme Court of Ohio Considers Eliminating Mental Health from Character and Fitness Assessment, Adding Sexual Orientation and Marital Status to List of Factors Not to Consider

The Supreme Court of Ohio is considering two amendments to the rules for its process of assessing the character and fitness of people seeking admission to practice. One of the amendments, stemming from nationwide reports that such questions deter law students from seeking help that they need, would eliminate this factor: "Evidence of mental or psychological disorder that in any way affects or, if untreated, could affect the applicant's ability to practice law in a competent and professional manner." The second would modify the list of factors that admission committees are specifically told not to consider when assessing character and fitness; the word "sex" would be eliminated, and "gender, sexual orientation, and marital status" would be added. [Court News Ohio](#) has more information about both amendments, which are open for comment until July 25.

California Legislature Pushes Back Against State Bar of California's Exploration of Paraprofessional Program, Sandbox-Like Testing Framework

The future of two State Bar of California proposals to expand the role of nonlawyers now looks more dim: Last week, state senators passed legislation prohibiting the bar from spending money on any program that violates statutes barring the unauthorized practice of law. Also, the state Assembly Committee on Judiciary has amended the bar's annual licensing-fee bill in ways that some say are meant to stop the bar's exploration of a paraprofessional program or a so-called regulatory sandbox. Assemblyman Mark Stone, chair of the state Assembly Committee on Judiciary, said at a hearing last Tuesday that the proposals don't adequately address accountability for legal services provided by legal paraprofessionals or other nonlawyers; he and his state Senate counterpart, Tom Umberg, have also said the bar should focus on strengthening its disciplinary system rather than on the two proposals. Ruben Duran, chair of the bar's board of trustees, told the state Senate Judiciary Committee that the bar can improve its disciplinary system while continuing its efforts on the two proposals, and that the recent amendments "prematurely foreclose" that work. What is the next step for the licensing-fee bill, and are the bar's committees continuing to work on the two proposals? Find out at [The Recorder](#).

New Jersey State Bar Association Considers Lawsuit to Fill 'Unprecedented' Number of Judicial Vacancies

At the same time that it's exploring other solutions, the New Jersey State Bar Association is consulting with constitutional scholars about a potential lawsuit to force legislators to fill judicial vacancies across the state. Currently, there are 67 vacancies, and many counties have had to delay or cancel certain trials so they can continue to hear cases in criminal, family, and domestic violence matters. Last week, the chair of the state Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Brian Stack, announced that the full Senate would interrupt its customary summer break to reconvene to confirm new judges. NJSBA President Jeralyn Lawrence said that while this is a good start, it's "a drop in the ocean" or "one bite of the elephant,"

considering the magnitude of the problem and the harm it continues to cause. Learn more at [New Jersey Monitor](#).

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