

Florida Coastal Law School Sues ABA



Summary: *Infilaw's Florida Coastal School of Law is suing the American Bar association for violating their due process in the accreditation review process.*

[Florida Coastal School of Law](#) filed a lawsuit Thursday against the American Bar Association, claiming their due process in the accreditation review process was violated. They are requesting a jury trial and injunctive relief in their suit filed in the U.S. District Court Middle District of Florida.

Florida Coastal's owner, InfiLaw Corp. is requesting in their complaint against the ABA that the court vacate and prohibit its enforcement by setting aside the April ruling by the ABA's accreditation committee. Ultimately, they want the ABA to give Florida Coastal its accreditation back and award damages for the damage to their reputation.

The ABA notified Florida Coastal in October that they were in compliance with general standards but was noncompliant with the standards regarding admission requirements and the law school's ability to prepare students to pass the Bar examination so they can be attorneys.

In an effort to address the compliance issues, the school's president, Dennis Stone, and dean, Scott DeVito, went before the Accreditation Committee of the ABA Counsel of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar a few months ago in March. There they submitted data that they believed showed they were in compliance. The next month the ABA made their ruling.

DeVito said, "We've gone through the process with the ABA. We attempted to provide them with information we believe shows we're in compliance."

The data showed the law school was more stringent than 52 other law schools and that over the past three years, they have been increasing their minimum requirements for admission such as Law School Admission Test scores. Stone noted, "There are law schools with lower credentials than ours that are found to be in compliance."

Florida Coastal posted strong results from the February bar exam, ranking fourth out of 11 law schools for first-time takers passing the exam. Their students ranked first in the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

The Jax Daily Record states that DeVito said the committee asked them in October to submit detailed performance reports at the end of each semester; there was no mention of their accreditation being revoked or put on probation. He said, "All they said is to submit reports. They didn't tell us what we have to do to get back into compliance. We have no guidance whatsoever. That's a failure of due process."

Stone commented on the shift he has seen within the ABA. He said, "I've been working with the ABA for 40 years. At one time, the ABA helped schools deal with issues. The helping part has disappeared."

DeVito added, "The ABA has shifted to an antagonistic model."

Stone said they opted for a lawsuit so the matter can be solved quickly since the reporting requirement given to them would go "all the way through 2019, at least, to get through the process." DeVito added, "The best way to protect our students and alumni is to file suit."

Do you think the ABA comes down too hard on law schools and fails to give them proper time to fix any problems? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about Florida Coastal, read these articles:

- [Florida Coastal Students Hit 97 Percent Passage Rate on MPRE](#)
- [Florida Law Schools Post Low Bar Passage Rates](#)
- [ABA Publishes Letters on Law School Accreditation Statutes](#)

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