

## California Bar Exam to Allow Remote and Out-of-State Testing in 2024



### New Bar Exam Policy Set to Begin in February

California bar examinees may soon have the option to take the attorney licensing exam outside the state, pending final approval for a February 2024 launch. The State Bar of California's Committee of Bar Examiners voted 8-3 to allow candidates to sit for the exam remotely or at testing centers in other states and countries. However, the exam must be taken simultaneously with the in-state version to minimize the risk of cheating.

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### Cost-Saving Benefits for Out-of-State Applicants

This policy sets California apart from other states, which typically require examinees to take the test within the jurisdiction where they wish to practice. The new rule is expected to save out-of-state applicants hundreds of dollars in travel expenses. With the new exam format, California plans to shift from large, in-person gatherings to either an online format or smaller testing centers, starting with the February 2024 exam. This move is projected to save the state bar approximately \$3.8 million annually, by cutting costs associated with renting large venues. The savings come at a crucial time, as the bar's admissions department is facing a financial shortfall.

### Legal and Procedural Challenges Delay Implementation

Plans to implement the new exam structure faced a setback in September when the California Supreme Court rejected the State Bar's initial petition, citing procedural issues. However, the Committee of Bar Examiners reconvened and voted in late September to resubmit the proposal. A new petition was filed on October 4, and while the Supreme Court has yet to issue a ruling, the state bar is moving forward with preparations, expecting the new format to gain approval.

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### Widespread Impact on Bar Applicants

The potential impact of this change is significant for bar applicants, especially those living out of state. According to state bar officials, 20% to 22% of bar exam applicants for recent tests provided out-of-state addresses. In July 2023, a quarter of examinees traveled over 250 miles to take the test, with a third spending \$1,000 or more on travel and lodging expenses. By offering remote testing options, the state bar aims to alleviate these financial burdens for applicants.

### California's Influence as a Major Bar Exam Jurisdiction

California is the second-largest bar exam jurisdiction in the United States, after New York, with 11,320 aspiring attorneys taking the exam in 2023. The upcoming changes are expected to set a precedent, possibly influencing other states to reconsider their testing policies.

### Collaboration with Measure Learning for Secure Testing

To ensure the security and integrity of the new exam format, the State Bar is finalizing an agreement with Measure Learning. This testing company will handle both online and in-person proctoring. Officials have assured that the testing experience will be consistent, whether examinees take the test in California or remotely.

**Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.**