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OSBA Member Update on Jury Trials and the Bar Exam Message From OSBA President Eleana Drakatos

Safely Resuming Jury Trials Amid COVID-19

As Ohio businesses begin to reopen under strict hygiene and social distancing standards, there continues to be robust discussion about the safest way to resume jury trials. Thus far, the General Assembly passed legislation to allow for tolling of court deadlines and statutes of limitations and Chief Justice O'Connor has encouraged judges to grant continuances for trials whenever possible.

The Ohio Judicial Conference has circulated [suggested guidelines](#) to advise judges who must balance available resources, facilities and the specifics of the cases on their dockets. Meanwhile, the OSBA was invited to participate in a statewide advisory group, providing input to the Supreme Court of Ohio from the perspective of defense attorneys, prosecutors and civil counsel, as well as bailiffs, court reporters, deputies, witnesses and clerks of court.

Many thanks to Belinda Barnes, our representative on the advisory group, as well as fellow members who worked closely with her, including Jan Allen Baughman, Frank Gallucci, Katherine Hollingsworth, John Holschuh and Matthew Mullen. We are also grateful to all of you who provided your input through the survey we sent last week.

While the discussion continues, I wanted to provide you a copy of the [recommendations](#), which were timely delivered to Chief Justice O'Connor this week. We will keep you posted on any further developments, but it is very clear that there remains a lot of concern amongst the practicing bar not only about their own personal safety and that of their clients, but also on the ability to ensure a fair trial for all litigants under current restrictions.

Supreme Court Delays Bar Exam, Allows for Temporary Supervised Practice

Just as COVID-19 presents significant challenges for jury trials, it also makes it difficult to administer the bar exam. We got word this week that the Supreme Court has delayed the July bar exam until September 9-10.

The OSBA Board of Governors had previously joined in [a letter](#) with the deans of Ohio's law schools to encourage the Court to find a way to conduct the exam remotely. Ohio deans and some student bar associations had also petitioned the Court to allow for conditional licensing for recent law school graduates. In an announcement late yesterday, this request was granted,

and beginning June 15, recent law school grads who were preparing to take the exam in July will be able to apply to the Court to practice law pending admission to the bar. They must work under the supervision of an attorney in good standing with at least three years in practice. You can read more about the Court's order via [Court News Ohio](#).

Congrats to Ohio's Newest Attorneys

This was also a big week for those who sat for and passed the February bar exam. I was pleased to participate in the Supreme Court of Ohio's first ever, virtual Bar Admissions Ceremony this week and to be among the first to [welcome](#) the 124 new attorneys to our ranks. While we could not host our traditional reception at the Court and meet them in person, we'll be reaching out to them in the weeks ahead to get them signed up for their first year of free membership in the OSBA.

More than ever, the legal community must rally and support one another, particularly our new lawyers and those students waiting to take the bar. They are entering our profession during such an unprecedented and difficult time. If you know one of these new lawyers or, for that matter, have other colleagues who are not OSBA members and could use our support, please be good OSBA ambassadors encourage them to join us via [OhioBar.org/becomeamember](#) or call our Member Service Center at 1-800-232-7124, where our staff (who continue to safely social distance and work from home) will be happy to help them.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy, regularly check our [COVID-19 Resource Directory](#) for information and updates and email us at osba@ohioabar.org if there is any additional information or support we can be providing you.

In Fellowship,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Drakatos', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eleana Drakatos

President, the Ohio State Bar Association