By: Virdell H.B. No. 1237

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a person's eligibility to sit for the examination for a license to practice law in this state.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 81.115(b), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b) A profile must contain the following information on each attorney:

(1) the name of each law school attended and the date the attorney graduated, if applicable;

(2) the date the attorney became licensed to practice law in this state;

(3) any specialty certification recognized by the state bar and held by the attorney;

(4) the attorney's primary practice location;

(5) any public disciplinary sanctions issued by the state bar against the attorney, including a link on the attorney's online profile to the full text of the disciplinary judgment entered by a district grievance committee or district judge; and

(6) any public disciplinary sanctions issued by an entity in another state responsible for attorney discipline in that state against the attorney.

SECTION 2. Sections 82.022(a) and (a-1), Government Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) The supreme court may adopt rules on eligibility for examination for a license to practice law and on the manner in which the examination is conducted. The rules may include:

(1) provisions to ensure:

(A) good moral character of each candidate for a license;

(B) adequate prelegal study and attainment; and

(C) [~~adequate~~] study of the law or practical experience in the legal field adequate for examination eligibility under Section 82.024 [~~for at least two years~~], which may include:

(i) a [~~covering the~~] course of study prescribed by the supreme court or the equivalent of that course;

(ii) an apprenticeship supervised by an attorney licensed to practice law in this state; or

(iii) professional experience as a paralegal in this state;

(2) the legal topics to be covered by:

(A) a [~~the~~] course of study prescribed by the supreme court or an equivalent course of study; and

(B) [~~by~~] the examination;

(3) the times and places for holding the examination;

(4) the manner of conducting the examination;

(5) the grades necessary for licensing; and

(6) any other matter consistent with this chapter desirable to make the issuance of a license to practice law evidence of good character and fair capacity and attainment and proficiency in the knowledge of law.

(a-1) In adopting rules on eligibility for examination for a license to practice law, the supreme court shall ensure that no rule violates Section 82.024 of this code or Chapter 110, Civil Practice and Remedies Code.

SECTION 3. Section 82.023(c), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c) The board shall notify each person [~~first-year law student~~] who files the declaration not later than the date established by supreme court rule of the board's decision as to the person's [~~student's~~] acceptable character and fitness. [~~The board shall notify all other declarants not later than the date established by supreme court rule whether or not it has determined that the declarant has acceptable character and fitness.~~]

SECTION 4. Section 82.024, Government Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 82.024. LAW STUDY OR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS; ELIGIBILITY FOR EXAMINATION. (a) In this section, "approved law school" means a law school the supreme court approves for the period the court designates as maintaining the standards required for approval and offering the course of study the court prescribes or an equivalent course of study.

(b) A person satisfies the eligibility requirements to sit for the examination for a license to practice law if the person [~~who~~] has completed:

(1) at least two years of a [~~the~~] prescribed course of study or its equivalent at [~~in~~] an approved law school;

(2) a three-year apprenticeship supervised by an

attorney licensed to practice law in this state; or

(3) at least five years of full-time professional employment as a paralegal in this state [~~has satisfied the law study requirements for taking the examination for a license to practice law and is eligible to take the bar examination. An approved law school is one that is approved by the supreme court for the time period designated by the court as maintaining the additional standards to retain approval~~].

SECTION 5. As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Supreme Court and the Board of Law Examiners shall adopt rules as necessary to implement Sections 82.022, 82.023, and 82.024, Government Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2027.