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ABA Shines a Light on Legal Deserts

2020 ABA Profile of the Legal Profession: Some Legal Deserts Are in Unexpected Places

When we list states where rural access to justice is a particular concern, often, we think of those that have a relatively low lawyer population overall. But in fact, some states with the highest number of lawyers per capita also have rural areas with few, if any lawyers. For example, in New York City, there are 14 attorneys for every 1,000 people, but in Orleans County, New York, there are 31 attorneys for 40,000 residents. The [2020 ABA Profile of the Legal Profession](#) gives special focus to the issue of "legal deserts" and delves into a wide range of other topics as well. What are some other important data points highlighted in this year's report from the ABA Media Relations & Strategic Communications Division?

State Bar of Texas Board Ties on Question of Removing President's Spokesperson Role

At last week's State Bar of Texas board meeting, a proposal to strip President Larry McDougal of his role as bar spokesperson resulted in a tie vote—the board's first tie in three years. The proposal arose because of several online comments in which McDougal expressed views that many find racist, sexist, or otherwise offensive. The board agreed to postpone the vote until a specially called meeting in August or September, which will give the board's legal counsel time to review the idea and advise about potential legal issues. [Texas Lawyer](#) has more details about last week's vote and what will happen next.

ABA House of Delegates Approves Resolutions on COVID-19 and Bar Exams, Law School

At its virtual meeting August 3-4, the ABA House of Delegates approved several resolutions that address the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways it might reshape both bar exams and law school. On August 4, the house approved a resolution that recommends against conducting in-person bar exams for the remainder of 2020. Instead, according to [Bloomberg Law](#), the resolution advises jurisdictions to offer either online bar exams or a limited license to practice via diploma privilege. On August 3, the house approved revisions to the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools. These resolutions, all aimed at allowing law schools more flexibility in their response to the pandemic, pertain to distance-education programs, the adoption of emergency policies by law schools, teach-out plans and provisional program approval. [ABA Journal](#) has more information.

ABA Model Rule Amendment Would Let Lawyers Give Small Gifts to Pro Bono Clients

In a move that some say would amount to regulation catching up with what happens in real life, lawyers may soon be able to assist their pro bono clients by buying them lunch or giving them money toward food, rent, and other necessities without breaching ethics rules. At its virtual meeting held August 3-4, the ABA House of Delegates approved an amendment to Model Rule 1.8(e), submitted by the ABA Standing Committees on Ethics and Professional Responsibility and Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. Previously, this model rule said it was unethical to provide humanitarian aid to low-income clients; the

amendment allows lawyers to give "modest gifts" to their low-income pro bono clients if they choose to do so. Learn more about this rule change at [Bloomberg Law](#). (Note: This article was written before the amendment was approved.)

The Great Unfinished Fight: A Conversation on the History and Legacy of the 19th Amendment

August 2020 marks the centennial anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. The passage marked the largest expansion of democracy in the history of our country?but true equality remained elusive, particularly for women of color. On August 24 at 12-1 p.m. Eastern, a special commemorative program will feature a conversation between the Hon. M. Margaret McKeown, chair of the ABA Commission on the 19th Amendment, and Elaine Weiss, author of *The Woman?s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. Learn the gripping story of how women won the right to vote and opened the door to future battles for civil rights. Patricia Lee Refo, President-elect of the American Bar Association, will give introductory remarks. [Register today!](#)



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