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Has Virtual Court Been a Win for Rural Areas?

The Digital Divide: Has Virtual Court Been a Win for Rural Areas?

For people in rural areas, the pandemic-prompted shift to virtual court proceedings has been a double-edged sword: It has eliminated the two hours or more that many used to spend driving to and from court, but it has also created hurdles for those who lack reliable internet access. Estimates of the digital divide across the United States vary; the Federal Communications Commission says about 14.5 million Americans are without broadband internet, but another organization that reviewed the FCC's data says this number is closer to 42 million. Gaps in terms of who owns smartphones, desktops, or laptops further compound the problem. Many advocates are using "justice buses," mobile technology kiosks, and Starlink satellites to help provide access to court proceedings. [Bloomberg Law](#) looks at these and other efforts, and also at the lingering concern that even if technology needs are met, virtual court still can't replicate being there in person.

Report for The Florida Bar: Changes Needed to Make Court Rule Proposal Process More Efficient

A new report commissioned by The Florida Bar and drafted by a former Florida state courts administrator recommends several changes, but not a total overhaul, to the process by which the bar's rules committees make court rule proposals. Consultant Lisa Kiel found that Florida's model of having bar volunteers supported by bar staff draft these proposals is a reasonable approach and need not be replaced with a model used in other states, such as having rules commissions or state Supreme Court staff do the work. Still, there are often lengthy delays at various points in the process, the report says, caused by factors such as overly large committees, varying procedures, too-infrequent meetings, vague or unenforced deadlines, lack of clarity regarding expectations for committee vice chairs, and turnover due to term limits. [Florida Bar News](#) shares more findings and a link to the full report.

Lawyers Losing Ground When It Comes to Median Real Income in Past Two Decades

At first glance, it may look as if lawyers' income is increasing—but appearances can be deceiving. According to researchers at the Old Dominion University, once inflation is factored in, lawyers' median real income has dropped over nearly two decades: Using July 2020 prices, median lawyer income in the United States was \$129,389 in 2001, compared with \$126,930 in 2020. The peak during that time span was in 2010, when lawyers earned \$134,005 after adjusting for inflation. And while many nonlawyers are also feeling the pinch of inflation, the median real income for all workers has increased by almost 4% since 2001. What could account for the drop in lawyers' real income? Find out at [ABA Journal](#).

With Alternative Pathways Potentially on the Horizon, ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar Looks at Bar Pass Standard

With several jurisdictions now looking into alternative pathways to attorney licensure, the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar is examining the language of its

law school accreditation standard that says at least 75% of a law school's graduates must pass a bar exam within a two-year period. In January 2022, the Oregon Supreme Court approved in concept attorney admission through law school programs and supervised practice, as well as through a bar exam; other jurisdictions currently studying this issue include California, Minnesota, Washington state, and Nevada. As part of its standards review committee agenda for this year, the section proposes making sure the wording of Standard 316 accounts for alternative pathways and does not "unduly dissuade" law schools and regulatory agencies from exploring alternatives to the bar exam. Learn more at [ABA Journal](#).

Lawyers, Law Students Needed for Poll Worker, Esq.

The American Bar Association is partnering with the National Association of Secretaries of State and the National Association of State Election Directors to mobilize lawyers, law students, and other legal professionals to serve as nonpartisan poll workers for the upcoming election. Poll workers help people vote and help local officials ensure that elections are free, fair, and accurate. Depending on the state, tasks may range from staffing polling places to processing returned ballot envelopes and more. Lawyers and law students are especially suited to help. In some states, poll worker training is eligible for CLE credit. Details on how to serve as a poll worker, along with other election resources, are available at ambar.org/vote.



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