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AB-1522 State Bar Act: expedited licensure: federal attorneys. (2025-2026)

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Date Published: 05/15/2025 09:00 PM

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 15, 2025

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 10, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 1522

Introduced by Committee on Judiciary (Assembly Members Kalra (Chair), Bauer-Kahan, Bryan, Connolly, Harabedian, Pacheco, Papan, Stefani, and Zbur)

March 18, 2025

An act to amend Section 6062 of, and to add Sections 6060.8 and 6106.4 to, the Business and Professions Code, relating to professions and vocations, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1522, as amended, Committee on Judiciary. State Bar Act: expedited licensure: federal attorneys.

The State Bar Act provides for the licensure and regulation of attorneys by the State Bar of ~~California~~, *California (State Bar)*, a public corporation governed by a board of trustees. The act requires a person who has been admitted to practice law in specified jurisdictions outside of this state, including a sister state, in order to be certified to the Supreme Court for admission and a license to practice law in this state, to meet certain criteria, including having passed the general bar examination or Attorneys' Examination, as applicable, given by the examining committee.

This bill would require the State Bar to transmit, on or before January 1, 2026, a proposal outlining a process for expediting the licensure to practice law in this state of an attorney who meets certain criteria, including that the attorney was employed by an agency of the federal government on January 20, 2025. The bill would define "expediting the licensure" to mean a licensing process that does not require an attorney to take either the general bar examination or the attorneys' examination. The bill would exclude any person eligible for licensure as an attorney pursuant to this process from the requirement that the person pass the general bar examination or attorneys' examination to be certified to the Supreme Court for admission and a license to practice law in this state.

The ~~act~~ *State Bar Act* also provides for the investigation and discipline of a licensee of the State Bar and authorizes the Supreme Court to suspend or disbar an attorney for specified causes, including for a conviction under the laws of another state or territory of the United States that is deemed a felony. Existing law provides that specified evidence that a licensee committed professional misconduct in another jurisdiction is conclusive evidence that the licensee is culpable of professional misconduct.

~~This bill would require, instead, a person who has been admitted to practice law in specified jurisdictions outside of this state, including a sister state, in order to be certified to the Supreme Court for admission and a license to practice law in this state, to meet certain criteria, including having passed the examination prescribed by the examining committee unless that person has been an active licensee in good standing of the bar of a specified jurisdiction for at least 4 years immediately preceding their seeking admission and licensure, in which case the examining committee may provide an alternative means of receiving admission and licensure.~~

This bill would provide that an excluded event shall not be grounds for disciplinary action or require an attorney or applicant to report the excluded event to the State Bar, supply evidence that an attorney is culpable of professional misconduct in this state, or serve as grounds to deny admission to the State Bar to an applicant. The bill would define "excluded event" to mean certain actions taken when based on the application of another state's law that interferes with any person's right to receive, provide, recommend, enable, or advocate for sensitive services, as defined, that would be lawful in this state.

~~This bill would require the State Bar to transmit, on or before January 1, 2026, a proposal outlining a process for expediting the licensure to practice law in this state of an attorney who meets certain criteria, including that the attorney was employed by an agency of the federal government on January 20, 2025. The bill would define "expediting the licensure" to mean a licensing process that does not require an attorney to take the State Bar examination.~~

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: 2/3 Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. *Section 6060.8 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:*

6060.8. (a) *As used in this section, "expediting the licensure" means a licensing process that does not require an attorney to take either the general bar examination or the attorneys' examination.*

(b) *On or before January 1, 2026, the State Bar shall transmit to the Supreme Court a proposal outlining a process for expediting the licensure to practice law in this state of an attorney who meets all of the following criteria:*

- (1) The attorney was employed by an agency of the federal government on January 20, 2025.*
- (2) The attorney has been licensed to practice law by a sister state or United States jurisdiction, possession, or territory for a minimum of four years.*
- (3) The attorney does not have a record of discipline from the licensing authority of a sister state.*
- (4) The attorney can produce a statement of professional competence by at least one member of the State Bar.*

~~SECTION 1.~~ **SEC. 2.** *Section 6062 of the Business and Professions Code is amended to read:*

6062. (a) *To be certified to the Supreme Court for admission, and a license to practice law, a person who has been admitted to practice law in a sister state, United States jurisdiction, possession, territory, or dependency the United States may hereafter acquire shall:*

- (1) Be of the age of at least 18 years.*
- (2) Be of good moral character.*
- (3) ~~Have~~ (A) Except as provided in subparagraph (B), have passed the general bar examination prescribed given by the examining committee, unless committee. However, if that person has been an active licensee in good standing of the bar of an admitting sister state or United States jurisdiction, possession, or territory for at least four years immediately preceding their seeking admission and licensure, in which case the examining committee may provide an alternative means of receiving admission and licensure: the first day of the examination applied for, that person may elect to take the attorneys' examination rather than the general bar examination. Attorneys admitted less than four years and attorneys admitted four years or more in another jurisdiction but who have not been active licensees in good standing of their admitting jurisdiction for at least four years immediately preceding the first day of the examination applied for must take the general bar examination administered to general applicants not admitted as attorneys in other jurisdictions.*

(B) Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to any person eligible for licensure as an attorney in accordance with a process approved by the Supreme Court pursuant to Section 6060.8.

(4) Have passed an examination in professional responsibility or legal ethics as the examining committee may prescribe.

(b) To be certified to the Supreme Court for admission, and a license to practice law, a person who has been admitted to practice law in a jurisdiction other than in a sister state, United States jurisdiction, possession, or territory shall:

(1) Be of the age of at least 18 years.

(2) Be of good moral character.

(3) Have passed the general bar examination given by the examining committee.

(4) Have passed an examination in professional responsibility or legal ethics as the examining committee may prescribe.

(c) The amendments to this section made at the 1997–98 Regular Session of the Legislature shall be applicable on and after January 1, 1997, and do not constitute a change in, but are declaratory of, existing law.

~~SEC. 2. Section 6060.8 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:~~

~~6060.8.(a) As used in this section, "expediting the licensure" means a licensing process that does not require an attorney to take the State Bar examination.~~

~~(b) On or before January 1, 2026, the State Bar shall transmit to the Supreme Court a proposal outlining a process for expediting the licensure to practice law in this state of an attorney who meets all of the following criteria:~~

~~(1) The attorney was employed by an agency of the federal government on January 20, 2025.~~

~~(2) The attorney has been licensed to practice law by a sister state or United States jurisdiction, possession, or territory for a minimum of four years.~~

~~(3) The attorney does not have a record of discipline from the licensing authority of a sister state.~~

~~(4) The attorney can produce an attestation of professional competence by at least one member of the State Bar.~~

SEC. 3. Section 6106.4 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

6106.4. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) "Attorney" means an attorney admitted to practice law in this state.

(2) "Applicant" means an applicant for admission to practice law in this state.

(3) "Sensitive services" has the same meaning as in Section 56.05 of the Civil Code.

(4) "Excluded event" means any of the following, when based on the application of another state's law that interferes with any person's right to receive, provide, recommend, enable, or advocate for sensitive services that would be lawful in this state, regardless of the location in which the event takes place and regardless of the location of the attorney or applicant:

(A) The entry of judgment against the attorney or applicant in a civil action.

(B) The imposition of judicial sanctions against an attorney or applicant.

(C) The bringing of an indictment or information charging a felony against the attorney or applicant, or the conviction of the attorney or applicant, including any verdict of guilty, or plea of guilty or no contest, of a felony, or a misdemeanor committed in the course of the practice of law.

(D) The imposition of discipline or a finding of professional misconduct against the attorney or applicant by a professional or occupational disciplinary agency or licensing board.

(b) Notwithstanding Section 6049.1, 6101, 6102, 6103, or 6106, an excluded event shall not be grounds under this chapter for suspension, disbarment, or other disciplinary action, nor shall it require an attorney or applicant to report the excluded event to the State Bar, supply evidence that an attorney is culpable of professional misconduct in this state, nor serve as grounds to deny admission for any applicant for admission to practice law.

(c) This section does not apply to an event that would subject an attorney or applicant subject to this chapter to a similar claim, charge, or action under the laws of this state.

SEC. 4. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the California Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to fill vacancies in vital legal positions throughout the state, including in public defender offices, it is necessary to quickly provide licensure for recently laid off federal attorneys.