



Wisconsin Court System

Board of Bar Examiners

The Board of Bar Examiners (BBE) was formed on January 1, 1991, from two Supreme Court Boards: the Board of Continuing Legal Education and the Board of Bar Commissioners. The Board of Continuing Legal Education was created to administer the Wisconsin Supreme Court's mandatory continuing legal education requirements for lawyers. The Board of Bar Commissioners was charged with administering bar admission and compliance with the Code of Professional Responsibility. These functions are now combined under the BBE.

BBE Functions

As a board of the Supreme Court, the BBE administers the Wisconsin mandatory continuing legal education requirement and bar admissions by examination and by proof of practice. Effective Oct. 1, 1995, the BBE began conducting character and fitness investigations for all candidates for bar admission by diploma privilege. Under diploma privilege, graduates of the University of Wisconsin Law School and Marquette University Law School do not have to take the Wisconsin bar examination to practice law in the state as long as their schools certify their legal competence and the BBE certifies their character and fitness for the practice of law.

Service on the BBE

The Board of Bar Examiners has eleven members. In accordance with Supreme Court Rule 30.01, there are five seats for lawyers, three for judges and law school faculty, and three for non-lawyer members of the public. The Supreme Court appoints members of the BBE to an initial three-year term followed by one successive three-year term. The Board meets approximately eight times per year. Most of the meetings are held in Madison and one (the Fall meeting) may be held in a Board member's hometown. All Board members serve without compensation, but are reimbursed for necessary travel expenses, which includes overnight accommodations for those traveling more than 50 miles to attend the meetings. Twice a year those members of the Board who are lawyers typically grade the Wisconsin bar exam. The Board has a staff of eight employees and offices in Madison.

Online CLE Credit Reporting

In 2008, BBE launched an online reporting system for continuing legal education (CLE) credits. Several improvements have been made to the CLE electronic reporting system since its initial launch. Chief among the improvements is the ability to electronically sign the report forms, which now allows attorneys to fully file online. All attorneys are now required to file their CLE credits electronically.

Funding

The mandatory continuing legal education requirement function is funded through an annual assessment on all lawyers licensed to practice in Wisconsin and with additional money from late filing fees and reinstatement fees authorized by the Supreme Court. The bar admissions portion of BBE responsibilities is entirely self-funded with fees authorized by the Court.

Lawyers and non-lawyers interested in serving on the bodies described in this article should send a letter and resume to: Clerk of the Supreme Court, P.O. Box 1688, Madison, WI 53701-1688, or fax to: 608/267-0640 or e-mail to: clerk@wicourts.gov. Positions are filled on a continual basis and resumes will be kept on file for consideration for future opportunities.