



IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO

July 30, 2026

NO. S-1-AO-2026-00026

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ADOPTION OF
A SKILLS-BASED PATHWAY TO BAR
LICENSURE**

ORDER

WHEREAS, this matter came on for consideration upon recommendation of the New Mexico Supreme Court Bar Licensure and Rural Access to Justice Executive Committee (“Committee”) to consider the adoption of a skills-based pathway to bar licensure in New Mexico;

WHEREAS, in June 2026, the Committee submitted its report to the Supreme Court with a number of recommendations to address alternative pathways to licensure in New Mexico, *see attached Report and Recommendations of the New Mexico Supreme Court Bar Licensure and Rural Access to Justice Executive Committee*;

WHEREAS, the Committee concludes that the current exam-based pathway does not adequately assess the full range of skills necessary for the practice of law in New Mexico and creates barriers for otherwise qualified candidates, and imposes financial burdens on those candidates at a time when New Mexico faces a shortage of attorneys;

1 WHEREAS, to address these inadequacies, barriers, and unmet legal needs, the
2 Committee recommends adopting a skills-based pathway to bar licensure in New
3 Mexico, in addition to the current bar exam-based pathway; and

4 WHEREAS, the Court having considered the recommendation and being
5 sufficiently advised, Chief Justice Julie J. Vargas, Justice Michael E. Vigil, Justice C.
6 Shannon Bacon, Justice David K. Thomson, and Justice Briana H. Zamora concurring;

7 NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that the Committee's recommendations
8 as set forth in the report are APPROVED;

9 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that a skills-based pathway to licensure, in addition
10 to the current bar exam-based pathway, is adopted and shall commence upon further
11 order of the Court;

12 IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that a subcommittee (Subcommittee) to the
13 Alternative Pathways to Licensure Ad Hoc Committee is hereby formed consisting of
14 the following individuals, who shall be charged with the development of forms,
15 trainings, and rubrics for the skills-based pathway that are consistent with the
16 recommendations in the report and that shall be submitted to the Court for approval:

- 17 1. Chief Justice Julie J. Vargas
- 18 2. Justice C. Shannon Bacon
- 19 3. Ann L. Keith, General Counsel to the Chief Justice
- 20 4. Camille Pedrick, Executive Director of the Board of Bar Examiners

5. Deborah Jones Merritt, Professor, Ohio State University
6. Serge Martinez, Associate Dean of Experiential Learning, UNM SOL
7. Torri Jacobus, Director of Statewide Equity, Inclusion, & Justice, AOC
8. Arlene Baca, Statewide Training Coordinator, AOC CEI
9. David Stout, Professor, UNM SOL
10. Elizabeth Holmes, Training & Recruitment Director, NM LOPD
11. Royce Deller, Esq.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Board of Bar Examiners shall present proposed rule amendments, in accordance with Rule 23-106.1 NMRA, that implement the skills-based pathway consistent with the recommendations in the attached report;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Subcommittee shall recommend an implementation date for the skills-based pathway to licensure.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

WITNESS, the Honorable Julie J. Vargas, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New Mexico, and the seal of said Court this 30th day of July, 2026.



Elizabeth A. Garcia, Chief Clerk of the Supreme Court
of the State of New Mexico

I CERTIFY AND ATTEST:
A true copy was served on all parties
Or their counsel of record on date filed.

Sonia Perez
Clerk of the Supreme Court
Of the State of New Mexico