

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **TAKING BAR EXAM ESSAYS BY LAPTOP IS FOCUS OF NEW PILOT PROJECT BY MICHIGAN BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS; PILOT DEBUTS FOR JULY 2012 EXAM**

LANSING, MI, May 11, 2012 – Aspiring lawyers taking the bar examination have traditionally written their answers by hand, including lengthy responses to essay questions. But starting with the July 2012 bar exam, some exam takers will answer essay questions using their personal laptops, as part of a pilot project announced by the [Michigan Board of Law Examiners](#) today.

“In a time when attorneys are using tablets, laptops, and smart phones in and out of court, it doesn’t make sense to tell bar applicants that they can only use pens and pencils,” said Michigan Supreme Court Chief of Staff Matthew Schneider, who is spearheading the pilot project.

Concerns about security issues, such as using a laptop to surf the Internet for answers, have kept the board from permitting exam takers to use laptops in the past, Schneider explained. “But we now have software that allows applicants to type their answers while blocking access to files, programs, and the Internet for the duration of the exam,” he said. “After the applicant completes the exam, the software reboots the laptop so that access is no longer blocked.” Answers are then uploaded to a server for later printing and grading.

The pilot project is limited to applicants who have already applied for the July 2012 exam. Among other requirements, pilot project applicants must submit “Request to Participate” and “Release of Responsibility” forms available at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/bdoflawexaminers/LaptopTesting.pdf>. These forms must be received in the Board of Law Examiners office, by mail or hand delivery only, **no later than 4:30 p.m., local Lansing time, on May 31**. E-mail or fax submissions will not be accepted. Mail or deliver the forms to:

Laptop Testing  
Michigan Board of Law Examiners  
925 W. Ottawa  
Lansing, MI 48913

Applicants’ laptops must also meet minimum system requirements; the secure exam cannot be taken using a virtual operating system. Each pilot project participant will be required to download and register the secure exam software on the laptop the participant will use for the exam. There is a \$90 charge in addition to any other application or bar admission-related fees.

Due to space limitations, the board may not be able to accommodate all applicants who wish to participate in the pilot project. A final determination about the number of pilot project participants will be made on June 1.

The Board of Law Examiners already permits laptop use for applicants who need accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. For more details on how to seek an ADA accommodation, contact the Board of Law Examiners at 517-373-4453 or at [BLE-Info@courts.mi.gov](mailto:BLE-Info@courts.mi.gov).

For more information about the Michigan Board of Law Examiners, visit <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/bdoflawexaminers/>.

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