



Thomas Jefferson School of Law
Alumni Association
701 B Street
San Diego, CA 92101
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ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Thomas Jefferson School of Law Alumni Association Statement on ABA Accreditation

July 8, 2019

We are the alumni of Thomas Jefferson School of Law (TJSL). As TJSL alumni, we are a living testament to TJSL's quality education. We exemplify TJSL's commitment to promoting full and equal participation in our profession and in the justice system, and to encouraging pro bono and public service by legal professionals. We stand with our law school in respectfully requesting the American Bar Association (ABA) to reconsider its decision to remove TJSL from its list of ABA-accredited schools.

We are veterans and first responders. We are the first in our families to go to law school, and may be on our second or third careers. We are immigrants and the children of immigrants. We are business owners, advisors, academics, policy makers, and judicial officers. We are prosecutors. We are public defenders. We are public interest lawyers. We represent those who would otherwise have limited access to justice. The education we received at TJSL has given us the opportunity to play these vital roles.

TJSL is a school of opportunity. TJSL's student body is reflective of the diversity of the United States with respect to heritage, veteran status, LGBTQIA identity, socioeconomic status, and age. Many of those communities have historically been underrepresented in the legal profession. The ABA has long grappled with increasing the diversity of the legal profession, and founded a "Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession" to develop solutions. We believe the accreditation of TJSL, a school committed to diversity and opportunity, is in line with that goal and indeed furthers the ABA's mission. TJSL is ranked as one of the most diverse law schools in the nation by U.S. News and World Report and National Jurist.

Diversity and inclusion have always been the heart of TJSL's mission. By way of limited example, this year, TJSL hosted its 19th annual Women and the Law Conference and Ruth Bader Ginsburg Lecture Series. Its spotlight for 2019 was "The Way Forward: Gender, LGBTQIA Rights, and Religious Liberties." TJSL's Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic provides free legal services to an often overlooked, but richly deserving population of San Diego. Many more examples exist.

Standardized tests, such as the LSAT and the bar, are important, but can have a disproportionate impact on minorities. Law school should not be restricted to those who are strong standardized test takers. Bar passage rates are important to TJSL. To that end, TJSL has made, and continues to make, immediate and substantial changes to demonstrate TJSL's commitment to its students passing the bar. TJSL's alumni practicing throughout the United States and internationally are equally invested and committed to ensuring TJSL students' success. Those efforts should be strongly considered.

We are proud of our school and its commitment to diversity, service to our communities, and devotion to ensuring the success of TJSL's students. TJSL remains an excellent program of legal education. We are a part of a tradition of successful graduates, inspired to do meaningful work and give back to our communities. That is the legacy of Thomas Jefferson School of Law that deserves to continue. We respectfully request the ABA to reconsider.



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¹ Some Directors could not add their names to this statement due to their employers' rules. The statement was approved by the TJSL Alumni Association Board of Directors.