

United States Senate

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October 6, 2011

Wm. T. Robinson III
President
American Bar Association
321 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60654-7598

Dear Mr. Robinson:

Following the previous correspondence between your predecessor and me concerning law school reporting practices, I am writing to address some unresolved issues. While I applaud the American Bar Association's Section of Legal Education for addressing other deficiencies with current post-graduation employment and salary reporting requirements, I was very disappointed to learn that the Section decided not to require that law schools report the percentage of their graduates working in the legal profession or the percentage of graduates working in part-time legal jobs in its upcoming questionnaire.

In my two previous letters to your predecessor, I indicated my strong belief that the ABA should ensure that post-graduation employment data provided to prospective law students is truthful and transparent. His responses appeared to indicate a similar interest, but unfortunately it is difficult to square those previous statements with the Section's recent decision.

According to *The National Law Journal*, a Washington University law professor has determined that for the Class of 2009, at least thirty law schools had 50 percent or fewer of their graduates in jobs that required a law degree. Data published by the National Association for Law Placement indicates that since 2001, only two-thirds of graduates from all ABA-approved law schools obtained legal jobs.

However, we know that most law schools report that nearly all of their students have jobs shortly after graduation. The difference between the information reported by schools and the real legal employment rate for recent graduates is very troubling. That is why requiring law schools to accurately report the real legal employment rate of their graduates is so important.

In a year when a number of lawsuits alleging consumer protection law violations have been filed against ABA law schools, when major newspapers have devoted thousands of words to problems with law school reporting practices, and when two United States Senators have encouraged significant changes to your policies, it is surprising that the ABA is resorting to half measures instead of tackling a major problem head on.

I also continue to have concerns about the lack of transparency for prospective law students in other areas:

Independent Oversight

The Section of Legal Education failed to address the overwhelming need for independent oversight and auditing of statistics reported by law schools. In September, the University of Illinois was found to have been inaccurately reporting law school admissions statistics, the second such school to have done so in recent months. In addition, many lawsuits have been filed alleging that law schools are violating various state consumer protection laws and false advertising laws.

These developments are very troubling, and without independent verification of the information reported by law schools, the opportunity to file inaccurate reports will remain.

Merit Scholarships

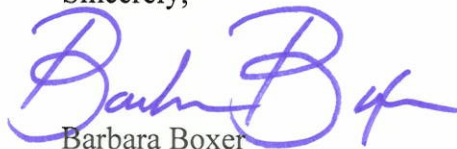
As I noted in a previous letter, the *New York Times* has detailed the recent increase in the number of merit scholarships offered by law schools and demonstrated how scholarships are being used to convince students with high LSAT scores to attend lower-ranked law schools.

While the opportunity to earn a very expensive law degree at a fraction of the cost can be an attractive option for many students, the *Times* exposed a major problem with scholarship transparency. Many law schools fail disclose how the school's grading curve and scholarship conditions can combine to prevent the student from understanding the scholarship's real value.

It was reported that at one school, 57 percent of first-year students in one class year received a merit scholarship, but only one-third of the students in that entire class could receive a GPA high enough to maintain their scholarships. Students should have more information about the risks of accepting merit scholarships so that they can make fully-informed decisions about their future.

I appreciate the ABA's willingness to make some changes to its reporting requirements, but I believe it is in the best interest of law students everywhere for the ABA to address these remaining issues as soon as possible. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator