

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 12, 2016

Board of Bar Overseers Announces Mandatory Online Registration for Attorneys

BOSTON, MA --- The Board of Bar Overseers (BBO) has announced that all attorneys admitted to practice in Massachusetts are required to submit their registrations online at www.massbbo.org effective Sept. 1, 2016.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court approved the new requirement on Oct. 20, 2015. Currently, approximately half of Massachusetts attorneys register online, and all other registrations are processed manually with paper forms.

Margaret Carlson, executive director of the BBO, said that the agency has not increased its registration fees since 2007, and a goal of the new requirement is to help keep administration costs low, ensuring that registration fees remain level.

“The new requirement will help us continue to run the agency at the current fee structure,” Carlson said. “In addition, we are looking at a number of ways to streamline our processes in order to keep overhead low and use funds toward the mission of the organization.”

The change brings the registration process for attorneys in line with other professional boards that require online registration, including the Board of Registration in Medicine, said Donna Jalbert Patalano, chair of the BBO and Chief of Professional Integrity & Ethics at the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office. “For attorneys, online registration should make their registration process more efficient,” Patalano said.

The new requirement doesn’t apply to newly admitted attorneys and attorneys who are registered as “pro bono inactive” and “pro bono retired” statuses. Certain other categories of attorneys are also exempt, including those who are not admitted to practice in Massachusetts, but must register with the BBO. Otherwise, the Board will handle requests to be excused from the requirement on a case-by-case basis.

“Any special dispensation from online registration should be granted by the Board, and the Justices ask that the Board liberally dispense with the online requirement when lawyers have a legitimate reason for being unable to register online,” SJC Justice Francis X. Spina said when approving the requirement.

The BBO has four cycles for attorneys to register throughout the year: September, December, March and June. Attorneys who typically register in the December, March or June cycles will be required to register online when they next renew.

About the Board of Bar Overseers

The Board of Bar Overseers (BBO) serves as an administrative tribunal overseeing the disciplinary process for attorneys admitted to practice in Massachusetts, when the Office of Bar Counsel imposes discipline on them. An independent body appointed by the Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court, the BBO also manages the annual attorney registration program and oversees the expenditure of the registration fees paid by lawyers.