



Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

EN BANC

NOTICE

Sirs/Mesdames:

Please take notice that the Court En Banc issued a Resolution dated April 29, 2020, which reads as follows:

“B.M. No. 3490 (*Regionalization of the Next Bar Examinations*)

Promulgated: April 29, 2020

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, pursuant to its constitutional authority to promulgate rules concerning the admission to the practice of law, the Supreme Court promulgated Rule 138, Section 11¹ of the Rules of Court, which provides that the Bar Examinations shall be held in Manila;

WHEREAS, Bar Matter No. 1142² dated August 13, 2002, which states that the Integrated Bar of the Philippines-Cebu City Chapter had proposed Cebu City to be another site of the Bar Examinations, manifests early on existing clamor to have a regional site for the examinations;

¹ RULES OF COURT, Rule 138, sec. 11 provides:
SECTION. 11. Annual Examination. — Examinations for admission to the bar of the Philippines shall take place annually in the City of Manila. They shall be held in four days to be designated by the chairman of the committee on bar examiners. The subjects shall be distributed as follows: First day: Political and International Law (morning) and Labor and Social Legislation (afternoon); Second day: Civil Law (morning) and Taxation (afternoon); Third day: Mercantile Law (morning) and Criminal Law (afternoon); Fourth day: Remedial Law (morning) and Legal Ethics and Practical Exercises (afternoon).

² Re: Resolution No. 04, series of 2002, of the Cebu City Chapter of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP).

WHEREAS, in Bar Matter No. 1142-A³ dated March 24, 2009, there was another request, this time by the National President of the Association of Law Schools in the Philippines, for the Bar Examinations in Manila to be simultaneously conducted in other sites in the Visayas and Mindanao;

WHEREAS, in Bar Matter No. 2310⁴ dated January 11, 2011, the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Talisay City and the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Mandaue City both requested that this Court hold the Bar Examinations for Visayas and Mindanao examinees in Cebu City;

WHEREAS, in 2016, this Court had previously agreed to a proposal by retired Court of Appeals Justice Portia Hormachuelos to simultaneously hold the Bar Examinations in Manila and Cebu City if the regional site had 1,000 Bar candidates,⁵ but later disallowed it merely because less than a thousand expressed such interest;⁶

WHEREAS, retired Court of Appeals Justice Portia Hormachuelos attributed the low turnout to the inadequate time to survey all prospective examinees, as well as the distance among the provinces that hampered the delivery of survey results;⁷

WHEREAS, the Philippine Association of Law Schools, through its current leadership, convened meetings with law school deans to discuss the possibility of having a regional site for the next Bar Examinations;

WHEREAS, the proposal to have a regional site for the next Bar Examinations was received favorably by the law school deans who have expressed their full support;

WHEREAS, based on a February 21, 2020 survey⁸ conducted by the Philippine Association of Law Schools, 89% of the respondents⁹ were in favor

³ Re: Resolution No. 04, Series of 2002, of the Cebu City Chapter of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines [IBP].

⁴ In Re: 4th SP Resolution No. 2010-84 of the City of Talisay, Cebu; Resolution No. 12-603-2010 of the Sangguniang Panlungsod, City of Mandaue, Cebu.

⁵ Gerome M. Dalipe, *Law school deans, IBP execs back efforts to hold Bar exams in Cebu*, SUNSTAR PHILIPPINES, February 24, 2016, available at <<https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/60061>> (last visited on May 26, 2020).

⁶ Michael Vyncenth H. Braga, *Law dean still hopeful for Bar's regionalization*, THE FREEMAN, May 31, 2016, available at <<https://www.philstar.com/the-freeman/cebu-news/2016/05/31/1588649/law-dean-still-hopeful-bars-regionalization>> (last visited on May 26, 2020).

⁷ Id.

⁸ Report on the Survey Responses from Deans of Law Schools Members of the Philippine Law Schools dated February 21, 2020.

⁹ Id. at 1–2. The report also states:

[P]lease note that out of a total of 127 possible responses, 28 Deans submitted survey responses. No analyses or conclusions however are made herein as to whether or not any significance on the acceptability of the proposed Bar Reforms can be attached to the fact that only around 22% of the law schools provided responses to the survey.

of a regional site for the next Bar Examinations, preferably in Cebu City, with positive comments on the proposal even from respondents in Metro Manila and Luzon schools;

WHEREAS, the social impact of providing a regional site for the Bar Examinations cannot be overemphasized, and may even lead to more regional sites in future examinations;

WHEREAS, the holding of the Bar Examinations in Manila has been a continuous financial and emotional burden on Bar candidates from the Visayas and Mindanao, who must spend inordinate sums to sustain their stay in Manila and be separated from their loved ones who could provide them with tangible and emotional support;

WHEREAS, this Court must be responsive to the pleas and needs of the Bar candidates from the provinces in order to reduce inequities;

WHEREAS, providing a regional site for the Bar Examinations would address these inequities by allowing Bar candidates from the Visayas and Mindanao to cut their expenses, continue with their employment, and receive the much-needed support from their family and friends while they review and take the examinations;

WHEREAS, recent governmental restrictions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic has limited movement between provinces, making regionalization more crucial than ever;

WHEREAS, a regional testing site for the next Bar Examinations will lessen the logistical problems caused by travel restrictions and curfew regulations that the Bar candidates will face in the coming months;

WHEREAS, a corresponding increase in the Bar application fees is necessary to cover the additional costs of regionalization;

NOW, THEREFORE, acting on the recommendations of Associate Justice Marvic M.V.F. Leonen, this Court, sitting *En Banc*, resolves to **APPROVE** the following:

(a) Cebu City shall be designated as a regional site for the next Bar Examinations. A site visit shall be conducted to find a suitable venue for the examinations, the schedule of which shall be determined once domestic travel restrictions have been lifted;

(b) The Bar Examinations in Manila shall be held at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. The final venue for the regional Bar Examinations in Cebu City shall be announced at a later date;

(c) Law graduates from the Visayas and Mindanao shall be given the option to take the next Bar Examinations in Manila or Cebu City. The guidelines for applications of those who wish to take the examinations in Cebu City will be announced later through a Bar bulletin;

(d) The Bar application fees shall correspondingly be increased to cover the costs of a regional examination site in Cebu City. The Office of the Bar Confidant is directed to submit a budget proposal taking into account social distancing measures and safety precautions in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rule 138, Section 11 of the Rules of Court is **AMENDED** accordingly.”

DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Chief Justice

ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE
Associate Justice

MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Associate Justice

ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

ANDRES B. REYES, JR.
Associate Justice

ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Associate Justice

JOSE C. REYES, JR.
Associate Justice

RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice

ROSMARI D. CARANDANG
Associate Justice



AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice



HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice



RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice



MARIO V. LOPEZ
Associate Justice



EDGARDO L. DELOS SANTOS
Associate Justice



SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice