

ABOVE THE LAW

LAW SCHOOLS

Bar Exam Leak! Massive Screw-Up Just Days Before The California Bar Exam

Test takers find out what will be on the exam before the exam.

By KATHRYN RUBINO
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Studying for the bar exam is a stressful bit of awfulness, but one that is necessary if you want to be a real-life attorney. It would certainly make life easier if you knew the precise subject matters that would be tested ahead of time, wouldn't it? Well, those who are taking the July administration of the California bar exam have unexpectedly received that valuable bit of information, just a couple of days before they're scheduled to take the test.

On Saturday evening, folks signed up to take the California bar received an email telling them the subject matters being tested on each of the essay questions. The reason why Donna Hershkowitz, Chief of Programs at the State Bar of California, took this most unusual step is that some California law school deans were inadvertently provided with the inside information. Though it is unclear how many deans were privy to the information, how long they had it, or whether anyone actually taking the bar exam on Tuesday had access to the topics, the powers-that-be at the California Bar decided in an abundance of caution to share them with everyone.

You can read the email for yourself:



To: Applicants for the July 2019 California Bar Examination

It has come to our attention that the State Bar inadvertently provided a number of deans of law schools in California a list of the subject matter topics contained in the July 2019 California Bar Examination essay questions and performance test. Out of an abundance of caution and fairness, we are sending the same information, verbatim, to all those preparing to take the examination. The memo provided:

The subject areas and tasks for the July 2019 California Bar Examination are listed below. . . .

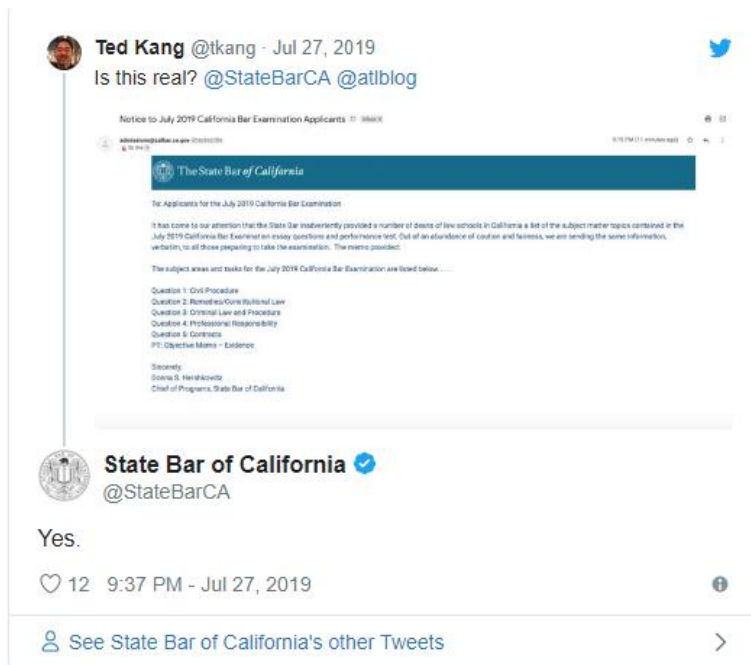
Question 1: Civil Procedure
Question 2: Remedies/Constitutional Law
Question 3: Criminal Law and Procedure
Question 4: Professional Responsibility
Question 5: Contracts
PT: Objective Memo – Evidence

Sincerely,
Donna S. Hershkowitz
Chief of Programs, State Bar of California

www.calbar.ca.gov



Initially some suspected the email was a hoax — some bad actor causing chaos days before the exam. Indeed, in an email sent to the Class of 2019, David L. Faigman, Dean of University of California Hastings College of the Law, advised students, “Please stay confident and, for now, assume it is some profoundly misguided joke.” But it isn’t a hoax — it was confirmed as legit by the official Twitter account of the California Bar.



Well then.

As you might imagine, here at Above the Law we’ve been inundated with test takers weighing in on the snafu. Here’s just a quick sample of the comments we’ve received:

The CA bar done fucked up....

This is insane.

California Bar Made a big uh-oh

But not everyone is happy that the Bar threw a monkey wrench into the last few days of studying for the most important exam of their lives:

You can't make this up. Please report this ASAP and help put pressure on the California Bar Association to make this right.

I don't know what else the California Bar could have done once they realized the subjects of the exam were outside of their exclusive control. It's certainly better that everyone has access to the information than only a select few have the heads-up to double down on their Civ Pro notes.

As Tammi Rice, Vice President of Kaplan Bar Review [noted](#), students about to take the bar exam have to use the information to their benefit without overly obsessing over it:

“This leak represents an unprecedented situation for a widely taken bar exam and while there are still questions to be answered about how this happened, right now students' only concern should be their final days of review. The good news for exam takers is that it eliminates about a dozen possible essay topics, so they know exactly which essay topics to focus on and which to ignore in their last days of preparation. This gives them the opportunity to hone their skills in the lead up to Test Day. We advise students to remain focused on their prep and to not let this throw them off their game. For all the students who have been studying hard for the bar exam: they've got this.”

Though it seems likely the information has ramped up the stress bar exam takers are feeling right now, now is not the time to lose focus. It might seem like a big reveal, but there is nothing too crazy or infrequently tested on the list (the Remedies/Constitutional Law crossover is interesting, but not overly shocking), and an objective memo is the most common PT format. Best of luck buckling down and making the most out of the precious time remaining before the bar exam.



Kathryn Rubino is a Senior Editor at Above the Law, and host of [The Jabot podcast](#). AtL tipsters are the best, so please connect with her. Feel free to

email [her](#) with any tips, questions, or comments and follow her on Twitter (@Kathryn1).

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