

IN THE HONORABLE SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
SITTING IN ITS OCTOBER TERM, A.D. 2021

BEFORE HIS HONOR: FRANCIS S. KORKPOR, SR.....CHIEF JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR: JAMESETTA H. WOLOKOLIEASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HER HONOR: SIE-A-NYENE G. YUOH.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR: JOSEPH N. NAGBE.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE
BEFORE HIS HONOR: YUSSIF D. KABA.....ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

**IN RE: THE PETITIONS OF JEWEL HOWARD TAYLOR, LAWRENCE
K. BROPLEH ET AL, ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE LIBERIA PRAYING TO THE HONORABLE SUPREME COURT OF
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA FOR ADMISSION TO THE HONORABLE
SUPREME COURT BAR AS COUNSELLORS-AT-LAW**

Heard: December 7, 2021

Decided: February 18, 2022

MR. JUSTICE KABA DELIVERED THE OPINION OF THE COURT

The walls of the sacred Chambers of the Supreme Court reverberated with the recitals of sections 17.1 and 17.6 of the New Judiciary Law Revised Code in a four-day sitting of this Court to examine and pass on the petitions of attorneys-at-law who petitioned the Court to become members of its Bar. Mr. Chief Justice Francis S. Korkpor, Sr. as per tradition read out these laws as follows:

"A person applying for admission to the Bar as an attorney must be a citizen of this Republic, have attained the age of twenty-one years, and be examined and licensed to practice as prescribed in this chapter." *Section 17.1*

"Any attorney who has been actively engaged in the practice of law for five years may submit a petition to the Supreme Court showing his moral and professional qualifications for membership in the Bar of the Supreme Court and praying admission as a counsellor of that Court. The petition shall be supported by the affidavits of at least two practicing counsellors of the Supreme Court, one of whom shall present the petition to the Supreme Court *en bane* in open court. If the Supreme Court accepts the petition, the Chief Justice shall appoint a

committee of at least three counsellors of the Supreme Court who, as soon as convenient, shall examine the petitioner and report in writing upon his moral and professional qualifications to the Chief Justice. In addition, the petitioner shall take and satisfactorily pass a written examination on questions which a lawyer in practice before the Supreme Court may reasonably expect to meet, which shall be prepared and conducted by the National Board of Bar Examiners. If the petitioner has satisfactorily passed the examination and if the report is favorable, the report shall be voted upon by the members of the Bar of the Supreme Court present at the next sitting of the Court and, if a majority vote for admission, the petitioner shall be admitted as a counsellor at law before the Supreme Court." *Section 17.6*

It should be noted that the recitals of these provisions of our law were not meant for mere formality, but that they clearly prescribe the qualifications and procedures for admission to the practice of law and to become a member of the Bar of the Supreme Court. At different periods since 2018, one hundred and twenty-four (124) attorneys petitioned the Court for admission to its Bar. These attorneys alleged that they are Liberian Citizens who have been admitted in their respective county bars as attorneys-at-law; that they have practiced law for the period of five years or more; that they are in good standing with their respective county bars and the Liberian National Bar Association; that they are of good moral and professional characters; and that their allegations of facts as are contained in their petitions are supported by affidavits of two counsellors of the Supreme Court Bar. These attorneys therefore prayed the Supreme Court to become members of its Bar.

Our search of the records shows that since 1861, the number of petitions by candidates petitioning for admission this time around is impressive and the highest in the history of the Supreme Court; however, as in previous cases, the petitions filed by the candidates for admission were, in many cases, laden with flaws to the dismay of the Bench. We observed some elementary procedural missteps in the petitions, withdrawals and amendments of the petitions, signing of affidavits and proffer of evidence of citizenship. It is sadden to note that since 2014 in an Opinion delivered by Madam Justice Sie-A-Nyene G. Yuoh during the March Term, when this Court annunciated certain standards and requirements for attorneys seeking to be members of the Supreme Court Bar and consistently

admonished counsellors presenting the attorneys to strictly comply with these standards, and requirements, indications in the recent examinations of the attorneys' petitions leave this Court with the impression that the counsellors practicing before this Court are not abreast of our recent opinions. In some cases, we have fined these counsellors and ordered them to effect the necessary corrections and refile the petitions as a precondition to forwarding the names of the attorneys to the National Board of Bar Examiners.

Additionally, we observed that some applicants had names on their birth certificates that were different from the names on their petitions. The justification for such discrepancies were said to be due to either marriage or change of name. It is important that in such circumstances the candidates so situated must provide or produce evidence for the differences in the names. The best evidence in such a situation is either the marriage certificate in the case of change due to marriage, a decree of divorcement in a case of change of name due to divorce or a decree of change of name in the event of a judicial change of name. Henceforth, it shall be a requirement that in all such instances, evidence in the nature as referred to herein should be annexed to the petition to justify the change of name.

Madam Justice Jamesetta H. Wolokolie, speaking for this Court sitting in its October Term, A. D. 2016 during the admission of attorneys to its Bar, accentuated "that the intent of the law requiring two counsellors-at-law to file a supporting affidavit to an applicant's petition for admission to the Supreme Court Bar is not only to confirm the statements made in the petition: but also as an approval by counsellors of the Supreme Court Bar that the requirements for admission to the Supreme Court Bar were met by the applicant; that the petition filed met the standard and quality of papers worthy of being filed before the Supreme Court, taking into account that the Court had often admonished counsellors to ensure that papers filed before the Court be of certain standards and worthy to be filed before the nation's highest court. The Supreme Court has often emphasized that lawyers should read and familiarize themselves with the Opinions of the Supreme Court... We must emphatically say that anyone who detests reading has no place in the legal profession. Reading of legal opinions, and we refer not to those only of our jurisdiction, puts a lawyer in a position of being well informed, and held in high esteem by his client as well as the courts in which he

appears. A hallmark of a successful lawyer is a lawyer who is *au courant* with the various interpretations of legal principles, the laws, and procedures set by courts, most especially the nation's highest court. The main form of persuasion on appeal is the written appellate brief, filed by counsel for each party. With the brief, the party that lost in the trial court will argue that the trial judge incorrectly applied the law. The party that won below will argue that the trial court's decision was correct. Both parties will support their positions with reference to applicable case laws and statutes, and in the analysis of the facts and laws presented, may assist the Court in the development of the law. An appeal is a more scholarly proceeding than a trial. Lawyers appearing before the Supreme Court must be able to cite several views, and most importantly the latest holdings on contested issues brought before the Court." *In re: The Petitions of Attorneys-at-Law for Admission into the Supreme Court Bar As Counsellors-at-Law, Supreme Court Opinion, October Term, A.D. 2016* We reiterate and reaffirm this position. We state here emphatically that going forward any candidate or counsellor-at-law presenting candidates before this Court and/or signing the counsellor affidavits who falls short of the basic requirements as announced in the revised standards and requirements shall suffer penalties which shall include the outright setting aside and denial of the petitions.

After the presentation of the attorneys in open Court, the Court through the Chief Justice appointed two Committees, the Examination Committee headed by Counsellor N. Oswald Tweh and the Moral and Ethics Committee headed by Counsellor T. Negbalee Warner, charged to further examine the intellectual capacity of each candidate as well as test for moral and good character befitting a member of the Supreme Court Bar. Others appointed on the Examination Committee are: Counsellors Philip A. Z. Banks, III, Stephen B. Dunbar, Jr., G. Moses Paegar, Snosio R. Nigba, Deweh Gray, Jallah A. Barbu, and Jamal C. Dehtho, Jr.; and others appointed on the Moral and Ethics Committee are: Counsellors Gloria Musu Scott, Cyril Jones, Golda Bona-Elliott and F. Juah Lawson.

The Court forwarded the names of one hundred and nine (109) candidates out of the 124 petitioners to the Committees for both written examinations in Civil and Criminal Procedure Laws, Constitutional Law, Contract, Commercial and Corporation Laws as well as oral and written ethics interviews and examinations. The names of nine candidates that the Court granted dispensation to were also

forwarded to the Committees for ethics interviews only. Five candidates did not appear for the hearing of their petitions, hence their petitions were not considered. The petition of one candidate, Attorney Alvin Teage Jalloh, was excluded from the list forwarded to the Committees. We shall speak further on the reason for the exclusion of that candidate's petition.

As indicated herein, nine candidates out of several applicants were granted dispensation by the Court. The candidates applying for dispensation included senior government officials and law clerks, prosecuting and defense lawyers. The Court, after a careful review of the petitions of those applicants, considered nine applicants for dispensation. Our decision was informed by our conviction that lawyers such as prosecuting attorneys and public defense attorneys are frontline lawyers whose knowledge, skills and arts in the law must not only be demonstrable, but that their demonstration of the arts of the profession will contribute to building public confidence in the rule of law and the Judiciary as the last hope for man on earth in the search for justice. The essence of the examination of attorneys of these categories is to continue to ensure that they are up to the task and that they are ready to represent party litigants before the highest court of the land with demonstrable competence. We will continue to review and update our internal rules and standards from time to time to reflect the high-quality standards of lawyers deserving of dispensation for admission to the Supreme Court Bar.

The decision by the Court to grant dispensation is not novel or unique in our jurisdiction. As far back as 1997, this Court speaking through Mr. Justice Emmanuel Wureh of sainted memory spoke to the issue quoting Mr. Chief Justice James A. A. Pierre, also of sainted memory, as follows:

"...Every applicant for admission to practice in the Supreme Court shall be required to prepare and file a petition, which shall be voted upon by the Supreme Court Bar; and he shall be expected to pass a bar examination, in keeping with requirements of the Rules, except in those cases where lawyers are appointed and commissioned by the President to positions which require them to practice before the Supreme Court. 20 LLR 748." *In re Petition of G. Henry Andrews* 38LLR 429 (1997)

Further to the above, the authority to grant dispensation is also in furtherance of the authority granted this Court by Article 75 of the Constitution to promulgate rules to regulate lawyers appearing before it and subordinate courts.

We will now consider the petition of Attorney Alvin Teage Jalloh. During the presentation of candidates to the Bench, it was noted that Attorney Jalloh presented all the required documents and that his petition addressed all of the concerns required to be clarified. However, in response to a question put to him by a member of the Bench relative to his citizenship, he informed the Bench that he is a Liberian and a naturalized citizen of the United States of America. This brings his admission to the Bar into question. Our law provides among other things, that for a person to be admitted into the practice of law in Liberia, that person must be a Liberian citizen. *Judiciary Law Revised Code: 4:17.1* provides as follows:

"A person applying for admission to the Bar as an attorney must be a citizen of this Republic, have attained the age of twenty-one years, and be examined and licensed to practice as prescribed in this chapter."

In the face of Attorney Jalloh's admission that he is a naturalized citizen of a country other than Liberia, we are of the opinion that forwarding his name for further examination will certainly be a violation of the Judiciary Law quoted herein in the absence of a judicial declaration of his citizenship status. By this holding, we are not making a determination as to whether or not he is a citizen of the Republic of Liberia. That declaration can only be made after a judicial proceeding for that purpose. In the case: *In Re: Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) by and through its National President, Cllr. Tiawon S. Gongloe vs. Counsellor A. Ndubuisi Nwabudike, Supreme Court Opinion, March Term, A. D. 2021*, this Courtspeaking through Mr. Chief Justice Francis S. Korkpor, Sr. held "that citizenship is a right protected by our Constitution and any proceedings to nullify, cancel citizenship or any right and privilege conferred pursuant thereto must be through resort to judicial proceeding." We also recognize that the proper officer to institute proceeding for the purpose of revoking and setting aside the citizenship of a natural born Liberian is the Minister of Justice in a court of competent jurisdiction. In light of the above, and before Attorney Jalloh's claim of a Liberian citizenship is properly adjudicated, we cannot have him admitted as a counsellor of the Supreme Court Bar.

At this juncture, we note that the Committees constituted by this Court to examine the analytical capacity, legal knowledge, skills as well as moral fitness of the candidates for admission to the Supreme Court Bar, submitted a consolidated report dated February 14, 2022. The report informs this Court that of the one hundred and eighteen (118) names forwarded to the Committees for written examinations and ethics interviews, 102 candidates were tested in "legal writing skills, analytical ability and knowledge of our legal practice and procedures, using a number of subject matter to provide factual contexts"; while 105 candidates sat the written examination on Moral and Ethics including three candidates who had previously passed the written examinations and were only required to sit the ethics examinations.

The report submits that eleven applicants failed the written examinations, but passed in the ethics examinations; that two applicants failed both written and ethics examinations; that four candidates failed the ethics examination, but passed the written examinations; and that the three candidates required to write or sit only the ethics examinations satisfactorily passed. Accordingly, the report recommends for admission to the Supreme Court Bar the names of eighty-eight (88) applicants or 83.8% of the 105 candidates who wrote the examinations; and eight of the nine candidates that were granted dispensation by this Court. The following are the names of applicants recommended by the National Board of Bar Examiners commencing with names of eight candidates given dispensation for admission to the Supreme Court Bar:

1. Taylor, Jewel Howard
2. Bropleh, Lawrence **K.**
3. Mamulu, Sam
4. Nimely, Jr. Andrew N.
5. Tarpeh, **B.** Augustus
6. Sidibey, Musa **S.**
7. Weeks, Angelique G. Eupheme
8. Josiah, John F.
9. Brumskine, Charlyne M.
10. Kruah, Prince M.
11. Tingba, Jr. Aagon Fremling
12. Jappah, Aloysius Teah
13. Korboi, Jesse B.

14. Juah, Sr. Bestman Darward
15. Teh, Kunkunyon Wleh
16. Katiah, David N.
17. Carlor, II Sennay
18. Yeke, Carmerna C.
19. Vobah, Tomik L.J.
20. Theoway, Joel Elkanah
21. Addy, Jr. Julius Ronnie
22. Elliott, Regina Tanneh
23. Dixon, Phil Tarpeh
24. Gweh, Allen Fohn
25. Wilson, Pela Boker
26. Dougba, Tommy N.
27. Seekpee, James Baipaye
28. Tomah, T. Emmanuel
29. Dayrell, Jacob **K**.
30. Toe Jegblandeyon Aloysius
31. Bility, Losene F.
32. Johnson, William M.
33. Tandjiekpon, Haider Janniedel M.
34. Godfrey, Lorpu Williams
35. Bloh, Socar V.K.
36. Cole, Sr. Supu H.W.
37. Beer, Robert M.
38. Gbaintor, Nya Sannagon
39. Nigba, Margaret Muna
40. Sherif, Stanislaus Mohammed
41. Kumbuyah, Ramses T.
42. Nasser, Khadiatu Tall
43. Nimley, Frank F.
44. Nyantee, Eduardo Blamo
45. Ross, Kojoe N.
46. Scott, Jr. Richard J.
47. Sirleaf, Mameita Jabateh
48. Bangalu, J. Cole
49. Dolo, Yanquoi Z.

50. Gongloe, Evelyn Kou Lah
51. King, Peter G.
52. Nah, Gabriel W.
53. Odoi, Joshua G.K.
54. Sheriff, Khalifa V.
55. Barchue, Aaron Walter
56. Barchue, Edwina Edejerah
57. Golafalley, Mohammed F.
58. Johnson, Gabriel A.
59. Moore, K. Rufus
60. Quaye, Bruce Wallace
61. Holmes, Alfred B.
62. Tweah, Norris Lester
63. Yangbe, Jr. Moses K.
64. Kenneth, Amara A.
65. Kouwehoven, Monique E.
66. Kutu-Akoi, Sumo C.
67. Morrison, Arthur N.
68. Appleton, Gerald Gleh
69. Williams, Jr. Isaac B.
70. Kamara, Boakai B.
71. Nyumah, John Saah
72. Tuan, Francis W.
73. Fallah, James Tamba Yekeh
74. Williams, Jr. Arthur O.
75. Fahnbulleh, Edward Z.
76. Daye, Nyonkpao R.G.
77. Itoka, Michael Cyril
78. Laywhyee, Bob B.
79. Sammy, Sia Ella
80. Doyen, Wittness
81. Gbartoe-Dor, Migbeh Saye
82. Miah, John D.
83. Glasgow, Herbert F.
84. Watson, Jr. Gboto A.
85. Suah,Pape

86. Clarke, Willette E. Kibly
87. Mabande, Bonyenoh Nah
88. Sirleaf, Alice Kouy Kenkpen
89. Wilson, David A.B.
90. Walker, Lavela B.
91. Zubah, Karsor K.
92. Anderson, Lucrezia Thomas
93. Sembay, Amos K.
94. Cooper, Adelyn P.
95. Griggs, Lafayette John
96. Catakaw, Miller B.

Considering the summary of the report as outlined herein, this Court adopts and hereby declares as a policy, henceforth, that an applicant failing the written examinations, and passing the moral and ethics examinations/interviews, as in the case of the eleven candidates, shall be required to file his/her petition for admission to the Supreme Court Bar anew on the next available opportunity; and after acceptance of his/her petition by the Court, he/she shall repeat the Bar examinations all over, that is including the ethics examinations. In the case of a candidate who fails the moral and ethics examinations and/or interviews, but made a satisfactory pass in the written examinations, as in the case of the four candidates herein, upon a petition to the Supreme Court stating therein that he/she had previously passed the written examinations, and after acceptance of the applicant's petition, he/she shall be required to sit the ethics examination and/or interview only. It follows therefore that Attorneys Eric N. Cooper, Arthur M. Washington, Sr., Augustine S. Togbah and Gayflor H. Zayzay, shall, upon duly filed petition before this Court, be permitted to sit ethics examinations on the next available opportunity for admission to the Supreme Court Bar.

We, however, note with utmost seriousness the allegation of unethical comingling of client's funds by Attorney Gayflor H. Zayzay and the recommendation of the National Board of Bar Examiners that he be investigated and sanction if found culpable, for this alleged ethical transgression. Although the Examiners' report indicates that Attorney Zayzay admits of this gross ethical violation of the Code of Moral and Professional Ethics of Lawyers, we agree with the recommendation that Attorney Zayzay be further investigated on this complaint. Accordingly, the said

recommendation is endorsed and the Grievance and Ethics Committee of the Supreme Court is ordered to take seize of this matter, investigate and report to the Supreme Court for further action. Pending the outcome of the GEC report and the decision of the Supreme Court thereon, Attorney Gayflor shall not sit the Moral and Ethics exams. The Clerk of this Court is ordered to send a mandate to the GEC of the Supreme Court to take seize of the ethics complaint against Attorney Gayflor and proceed in keeping with law.

The report of the Examiners also recommends that "Attorney Siefuah Mai Gray, who was granted dispensation, should not be admitted as a counsellor-at-law" on grounds that she "failed the moral and ethical scrutiny of the Moral and Ethics Committee of the Supreme Court for lack of candor, diligence and general truthfulness required by the Code of Moral and Profession Ethics". The report said that Attorney Gray had filed her application form after the deadline for submission and when questioned by the Committee, her reason for the late submission did not constitute excusable neglect and was implausible.

The records submitted by the Examiners to this Court show that on January 19, 2022, Attorney Gray communicated with the Chairman of the Moral and Ethics Committee sincerely apologizing for the tone of her letter to the Committee and for the "misunderstanding and oversight" therein. She therefore begged respectfully to withdraw the said letter. Notwithstanding the remorse demonstrated by Attorney Gray for the content of that letter, and considering that this Court gives the utmost attention to ethical comportment of lawyers appearing before it and the subordinate courts, we are left with no alternative, but to endorse the Committees' recommendation. Therefore, Attorney Gray will not be admitted to the Bar on this occasion. She shall be required to appear and pass the ethics examinations/interviews on the next available opportunity upon a duly filed petition before this Court.

In addition to the above recommendations, the Committees made a number of other recommendations for consideration by this Court in enhancing the future administration of the examinations to attorneys applying for admission to the Supreme Court Bar.

1. The Committees recommend that the Court adopts a definite schedule of the examination so as to ensure that applications are completed and submitted on time, that applicants from foreign jurisdictions are allowed ample time to obtain their clearances, and that applicants can also plan their travels, study programs and other schedules. We note that this recommendation was contained in a report of the Examiners during the October Term, A.D. 2016 of this Court. *In re: Abraham S. Sillah et al, Supreme Court Opinion, October Term, A.D. 2016* The Court declared then and now affirms that between late November and early December of each year, the examinations of candidates for admission to the Supreme Court Bar will be administered. More specifically, the Court in its Opinion delivered during the October Term, A.D. 2016, that is on March 3, 2017, selected November 15 as the deadline for the submission of petitions for admission to the Supreme Court Bar. We affirm this timetable. Henceforth, candidates desiring to petition this Court for admission to the Supreme Court Bar are required to file their petitions on or before November 15 of each year if they are to be considered for admission for that year. It is worth stating that the current petitions underreview were filed at different intervals since 2018. The reason for the high number of petitions during this time and why the annual schedule for the administration of the examinations was not followed is due to the Covid Pandemic and its attending social distancing requirement. We are hopeful that henceforth, the examinations will be annually administered and within the timeframe contained herein.
2. The Committees recommend that in addition to the recent Opinion of this Honorable Court concerning what is to be tested on the exams, there should be publication of the subject matters each applicant is expected to study, but with the caveat that the exams need not cover all of such enumerated subject matters. In this regard, we propose that the examination test the following areas: Procedural Law; Appellate Brief; and Legal drafting/writing. The means of publication can always be discussed or explicitly mentioned in an admission opinion of the Court. We agree with the Committees that there should be publication of the subject matters the applicants are expected to review in preparation for the examinations. We therefore hereby request Madam Justice Jamesetta H. Wolokolie to work along with the Board of

Examiners as currently constituted in the development of those publications for the review of the Supreme Court.

3. The Committees recommend that the Court engage the Liberian National Bar Association (LNBA) to discuss how the LNBA's Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program can be utilized to assist in preparing attorneys-at-law to take the Supreme Court Bar exams. The Court fully agree that the CLE program of the LNBA could greatly assist applicants for admission to the Bar in preparing for examinations not only to the Supreme Court Bar, but even for admission as attorneys-at-law to practice before the lower courts. We are of the opinion that a well-tailored CLE program will in general contribute to enhancing the professional and ethical standards of members of the Bar. We therefore hereby place at the disposal of the LNBA the expertise and the facilities of the James A. A. Pierre Judicial Institute in the development of test or examination modules, and the execution of a well-planned and organized training program. We shall instruct the Board of the James A. A. Pierre Judicial Institute to collaborate with the LNBA in strengthening the CLE program of the LNBA, especially in the area of preparing attorneys-at-law who desire to sit the Supreme Court Bar's examinations.

4. The Committees, in their recommendations, observed that majority of the persons granted dispensation have very little or no meaningful trial experience essential to practice before the Supreme Court; and that there is currently no mechanism for ensuring some minimum trial practice before exercising the right as Counsellor. They therefore recommend that (a) counsellor status obtained by dispensation be designated with some indicative limitations or that the person granted the dispensation be required to undertake trial practice under a senior lawyer for a specified period and that proof of such supervised trial experience be submitted to the Supreme Court before said counsellor can file any paper before the Supreme Court, independently and/or jointly. The Committees also suggested that the Supreme Court promulgate some criteria for the grant of dispensation. We shall consider this recommendation under advisement. They proposed factors such as number of years since admission as an attorney-at-law,

judicial position such as a judge, Ministers and deputy ministers serving in public legal position, and attorneys-at-law teaching in the law school.

We hasten to state here that during its October Term, A.D. 2016, this Court speaking through Mr. Justice Philip A. Z. Banks, III, encapsulated this concern in the following words "... we are mindful that certain persons may be fearful of failing the written examinations and hence seek coverage under the request or recommendation by certain institutions for dispensation. We are also mindful that the basis of administering examinations as a condition for admission to the Supreme Court Bar is to ensure that the applicants are capable and competent for practice before the Supreme Court, that the standard of law practice before the Supreme Court Bar is not diluted, and that the admission of such applicants does not create undue burdens for and upon the Court..." As stated earlier in this Opinion, the grant of dispensation lies within the competence of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has always ensured that all necessary measures are adopted when applications for dispensation are presented to it for consideration. The Court, when passing on applications for dispensation, takes those factors into consideration. The Court however, review all such applications on a case- by-case basis. We shall endeavor, as we have always done, to ensure that those granted dispensation possess the requisite competence to be granted the privilege of becoming members of the Supreme Court Bar. We however find it impracticable to grant a person the status of a counsellor and yet limit the privileges thereto appertaining.

5. The Committee noted that it will be important that the emphasis on both technical competency and moral skills be reflected in the level of background checks conducted on an ongoing basis and before the exams are administered, and that this should entail clear notice to the Grievance and Ethics Committee as well as the LNBA that a certificate of good-standing for the purpose of the Bar Exams is not based on payment of bar dues or the fact that the lawyer has not been suspended or disbarred; that it should be an expressed mandatory requirement that once a complaint is filed with the Grievance and Ethics Committee, a certificate should not be issued unless the Committee states the fact of the complaint and the basis of its decision to issue the certificate despite the pendency of the complaint.

The Grievance and Ethics Committee of the Supreme Court is an investigative body that is composed of senior and honorable members of the Supreme Court Bar meticulously selected by the Supreme Court with the responsibilities of scrutinizing and investigating complaint and act of unethical nature against lawyers. The Court has absolutely no doubt in the integrity of members of the GEC. However, We shall take this recommendation under advisement and shall take timely and appropriate action.

Regarding ensuring that sufficient background checks of candidates are conducted on an ongoing basis so as to ensure technical competence and moral skills, we are of the opinion that the LNBA and its members have a major role in this regard. As the parent organization of all lawyers that interact with lawyers on a day to day basis, it is the responsibility of the LNBA and its members to be present during the examinations of the lawyers by the Court; and to bring to the Court's attention any and all background information that would be necessary in determining the technical and moral fitness of the applicant desiring to be a member of the Supreme Court Bar. We have observed that over the years when applicants are presented for membership of this Court's Bar, the LNBA and its members hardly ever raise any objections. We therefore encourage the LNBA and its members to be proactive during the presentation of applicants for admission to the Bar of this Court. The maintenance of professional and ethical standards of lawyers admitted to the Bar of this Court should be a matter of utmost importance to the Bar and its members. The unprofessional and unethical actions on the part of any lawyer reflect negatively on the Bench and the Bar equally.

6. The Committees reported that one of its members inform the Ethics Committee that the father of candidate Julius Ronnie Addy, Jr. called and informed him that Judge Eva Marpay Morgan was canvassing with members of the Committees to ensure that candidate Addy was unsuccessful in the examinations. Due to the seriousness of this allegation, candidate Addy was cited by the Committee for clarification. Candidate Addy denied ever accusing the judge, but however admitted that he gave the information to his father. We take seriously false accusations of unethical action by judges of

our courts, thereby impugning on the integrity of the judge. While we note that Attorney Julius Ronnie Addy, Jr. denied ever accusing the judge of campaigning to ensure that he was unsuccessful in the exams as communicated by his father to a member of the National Board of Examiners via telephone, we however note that according to the report of the National Board of Examinations, Attorney Addy admitted during a meeting with the Ethics Committee of telling his father about the allegation. This act, if established, constitutes a breach of the Code of Moral and Professional Ethics and the oath of lawyers. We therefore forward this matter to the Grievance and Ethics Committee of the Supreme Court for further probe. Until the matter is further examined by the GEC, and acted upon by the Supreme Court, the admission of Attorney Addy to the Supreme Court Bar shall remain suspended.

7. The Committees in their recommendations reported that Attorney Wittness Doyen did not pay his application fee although he sat and passed the two examinations. They recommended that he should not be admitted and certificated until he makes full payment of his application fee. We are in full agreement with the Committees' report. We therefore order that Attorney Wittness Doyen shall not be admitted nor issue his certificate of admission to the Bar of this Court until and unless he pays or cause to be paid to the Clerk of this Court the full amount of his application fee. We further admonish the Committees that in the future no applicant should be allowed to sit the examinations in the absence of fulfilling all requirements including the payment of the application fee.

The Court expresses gratitude to the members of the National Board of Bar Examiners who after having thoroughly assessed the applicants, submitted a consolidated report recommending the admission to the Supreme Court Bar of the successful attorneys-at-law.

In light of the above, we hereby endorsed the recommendation of the Committees for the admission of the ninety-six candidates listed herein with the provision that the admission of Attorneys Julius Ronnie Addy and Wittness Doyen shall be suspended pending the removal of their respective disability as indicated herein.

The Court congratulates each successful attorney, especially, Attorneys Charlyne M. Brumskine, Prince M. Kruah and Aagon Fremling Tingba, Jr. who took the

first, second and third place, respectively, in the two examinations administered by the Committees.

WHEREFORE AND IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, and by the power vested in us as Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, we hereby grant the petitions of the above listed candidates, admitting today ninety-four attorneys into the ranks of this Supreme Court Bar, Republic of Liberia, as Counsellors-at-Law and with rights and privileges appertaining thereto. The Clerk of this Court is ordered to issue to each of the attorneys, named herein, a COUNSELLOR CERTIFICATE with the signatures of the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court affixed thereon, duly certifying that they have been admitted to the Bar of the Supreme Court and are permitted to practice law before this Honorable Supreme Court of Liberia. AND IT IS HEREBY SO ORDERED.