

Is Lee Gore Licensed to Practice Law in Florida?

As usmnews.net readers may know, the Florida Bar is investigating Lee P. Gore, past General Counsel at the University of Southern Mississippi and current General Counsel/Assistant to President Bense, for practicing law without a license in the State of Florida. On August 1, 2013, [Independent News](#) also reported the Gore investigation and added additional information about the case.

IN Staff reported that Gore runs the University of West Florida Office of General Counsel but his position was changed to "Special Assistant to the President." According to *Independent News*,

A stipulation of employment as general counsel, according to a document pulled from the UWF website and confirmed by Gore in a phone interview, was that he was to become a member of the Florida Bar within 12 months...

Kim Brown, UWF vice president and chief of staff, said that she is aware of the complaint and that Gore sat and passed the Florida Bar in February 2013 after requesting an additional extension on the 12-month deadline.

According to Independent News and records obtained by usmnews.net from the Florida Board of Bar Examiners website, Ms. Brown's statement is of questionable accuracy.

According to *Independent News*,

The document sent to Gore from the Florida Bar about the case [investigation of Gore practicing law without a license] states that Gore is "not certified as a House Counsel in the State of Florida." Monica Armster Rainge, Bar Counsel in the Unlicensed Practice of Law Department of The Florida Bar, confirmed in a phone interview that "there is a case that exists," and that Gore "is not a member of the Florida Bar."

Here's a problem with Mr. Gore's and UWF VP Brown's representations. Keep in mind that UWF VP Brown represented to Independent News that "Gore sat and passed the Florida Bar in February 2013..."

A letter dated **April 15, 2013** from the Florida Board of Bar Examiners, Administrative Board of the Supreme Court of Florida states

The Florida Board of Bar Examiners, through its Chair, the Honorable Gail E. Sasnett of Gainesville, Florida, has announced that the grades from the **February 2013** General Bar Examination have been approved for release by the Supreme Court of Florida. [Emphasis added.]

On February 26-27, 2013, 1,587 applicants took the Bar Examination in Tampa, Florida. The Supreme Court posted the pass/fail results for each applicant on its website **and score reports were mailed to each applicant today.**

The Court approved 632 candidates for admission to The Florida Bar on April 15, 2013, and Chief Justice Ricky Polston has announced that they may be sworn in as members of The Florida Bar. **Formal induction ceremonies to swear in the new attorneys will be held at the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth District Courts of Appeal on Monday, May 6, 2013.**

(Emphasis added.)

April 15, 2013 (the date on which score reports were announced by the Florida Board of Bar Examiners) and May 6, 2013 (the date on which lawyers who had recently passed the bar examination were formally inducted into the Florida Bar Association) predate the initiation of the investigation of Gore for practicing without a Florida license (June 25, 2013). If Gore did indeed pass the February 2013 bar exam, he should have been admitted more than a month earlier.

On July 25, 2013 -- more than a month after the formal admission ceremonies for those passing the February 2013 bar examination -- Mr. Gore was served with formal notice of investigation: "As I understand, you serve as General Counsel at the University of West Florida. Our records indicate that you are not a member of The Florida Bar and you are not certified as an Authorized House Counsel in the State of Florida." In fact, as of August 1, 2013, *Independent News* was reporting that "Monica Armster Ränge, Bar Counsel in the Unlicensed Practice of Law Department of The Florida Bar, confirmed in a phone interview that 'there is a case that exists,' and that Gore 'is not a member of the Florida Bar.'"

If Gore had been admitted to the Bar, as UWF VP Brown suggests, what could explain why Gore did not simply advise *Independent News* that the Bar had made a mistake, he had passed the bar examination and had been admitted to practice in Florida on May 6, 2013? Why tell *Independent News* that "Well, I've responded to the Bar and I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment," Gore said. "I am sure that they will treat the matter appropriately."

usmnews.net considers it unlikely that the Florida Bar failed to check its records before launching an investigation. Certainly, the Florida Bar Association takes such matters seriously and follows extensive and thoughtful procedures before it undertakes a formal investigation of accusations of practicing law without a Florida license.

As one source observed, has Lee [Gore] finally gotten caught playing fast and loose with the law and the rules?

usmnews.net will continue to report.