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A California bar association

Advancing the status of women in the law and society since 1972

October 31, 2018

The State Bar of California
Special Admissions
180 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Re: **Military Spouse Attorney Admissions**

To Whom It May Concern,

Attorney spouses of servicemembers know firsthand the challenge of balancing a career with the demands of the military lifestyle. Lawyers married to servicemembers face significant barriers to employment due to their frequent moves among duty stations. The requirement – and the cost – to take a new bar examination every two or three years is extremely disruptive to careers, particularly when the process of applying for, taking, and waiting for the results of a bar exam can last almost a year.

As a result of these challenges, military spouse attorneys have a 28 percent unemployment rate¹ and suffer from a \$33,000 wage gap² in comparison to their civilian counterparts. This disproportionately affects women in the profession because 95 percent of attorney military spouses are women.³ In recognition of these unique challenges facing military spouse attorneys, thirty-two states and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted rules to allow attorney spouses of servicemembers to practice law while accompanying their spouses on orders in a jurisdiction.

Lawyers Club of San Diego is a specialty bar association founded in 1972 to advance the status of women in the law and society. Our more than 1,300 members include attorneys in the private and public sectors, judges, the San Diego District Attorney, the San Diego City Attorney, past presidents of the San Diego County Bar Association, community leaders, law school students, and other members of the legal community. We are dedicated to our mission to advance the status of women in the law and society.

We encourage the State Bar to adopt a pathway to practice for military spouse attorneys that does not stigmatize them with overly burdensome supervision requirements

¹ Military Spouse JD Network, 2017 Military Spouse Attorney Survey, msjdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-Annual-Military-Spouse-Attorney-Survey.pdf

² Military Officers Association of America and Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Military Spouse Employment Report, vets.syr.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/MilSpouseEmploy_infographic.pdf

³ Military Spouse JD Network, 2017 Military Spouse Attorney Survey, msjdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-Annual-Military-Spouse-Attorney-Survey.pdf

contained in proposed rules 9.41.1(a)(3)(e) and 9.41.1(a)(4)(b). Instead, we support a requirement that a military spouse attorney be “employed by or in a mentorship relationship with a member of the California Bar who is eligible to practice law in California.” This alternative provision will allow military spouses to practice with the guidance of a member of the California Bar without imposing limitations that can disadvantage them in the hiring process.

We look forward to welcoming our military spouse attorney colleagues to the practice in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danna J. Cotman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Danna J. Cotman, President