

## **TITLE 2. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LICENSEES**

### **DIVISION 2. ANNUAL LICENSE FEES AND PENALTIES**

*Adopted July 2007; last amended effective November 14, 2024.*

#### **Rule 2.10 Definitions**

- (A) “Annual license fees” are those fees that any licensee must pay to maintain active or inactive status in a calendar year. These fees may include additional assessments and costs prescribed by law.<sup>1</sup>
- (B) “Penalties” are the surcharges assessed any licensee who fails to pay annual license fees on time.

*Rule 2.10 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective January 25, 2019.*

#### **Rule 2.11 Due date; form of payment**

- (A) A licensee must pay the annual license fees set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines each calendar year on or before the deadline set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.
- (B) The State Bar is authorized to prescribe acceptable methods for the payment of annual license fees. Any attempted payment that does not conform to a method prescribed by the State Bar may be rejected. If a licensee does not cure a nonconforming payment, the State Bar may nevertheless process the nonconforming payment before or after the deadline set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines. Nonconforming payments that are not cured by the licensee or processed by the State Bar by the deadline subject the licensee to the penalties set forth in rule 2.13 or suspension in accordance with rule 2.33.

*Rule 2.11 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective January 25, 2019; amended effective July 22, 2022; amended effective November 14, 2024.*

#### **Rule 2.12 New licensees**

A new licensee must be enrolled as active and pay initial fees within forty-five days of the invoice date for the fees as follows:

- (A) full annual license fees if admitted between January 1 and May 31;
- (B) half the annual license fees if admitted between June 1 and November 30;

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<sup>1</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, §§ 6140.5, 6140.7.

- (C) the administrative fee for admission set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines if admitted in December.

*Rule 2.12 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective July 20, 2007; amended effective January 25, 2019.*

### **Rule 2.13 Late and nonconforming payment penalties**

Late or nonconforming payment(s) of annual license fees are subject to the penalties set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

*Rule 2.13 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective January 25, 2019; amended effective November 17, 2022.*

### **Rule 2.14 No refund**

Unless these rules provide otherwise, a licensee is not entitled to a refund of annual license fees because of death, resignation, disbarment, transfer to inactive status, entering judicial office, or for any other reason.

*Rule 2.14 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective January 25, 2019.*

### **Rule 2.15 Scaling**

- (A) In this rule, “penalties” are construed narrowly and only include late fees for failure to pay licensing fees pursuant to the current Schedule of Charges and Deadline.
- (B) An active licensee who has a total gross annual individual income from all sources of less than \$60,478.35 may request a 25% reduction of annual licensee fees. The payment and fee scaling declaration must be submitted by the date set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines. Payments and declarations submitted after the date set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines will incur a penalty. The penalty will be eligible for scaling. Reinstatement fees are not eligible for scaling. To be eligible for scaling, requests to scale must be submitted within the calendar year for which the fees are assessed. The request must include:
  - (1) the Active Licensee Fee Scaling Declaration signed under penalty of perjury; and
  - (2) payment of the reduced fee.

New licensees admitted after May 31 do not qualify for scaling.

- (C) An employer that receives State Bar Legal Services Trust Fund grants and is a qualified legal services project or qualified support center as defined by statute may request a reduction of annual license fees by 25% for an active licensee employed on a continuous full-time basis or an active licensee employed on at least a half-time basis who has no income from other employment related to the practice of law. The request must be submitted by the date set forth in the Schedule of Charges and of Deadlines and include

- (1) the Qualified Employer Fee Scaling Declaration signed under penalty of perjury that the employer is qualified and pays annual license fees on the licensee's behalf; and
  - (2) payment of the reduced fee.
- (D) Licensees who scale are subject to audit and upon request must provide the State Bar with past federal and state income tax returns or other acceptable documentation of financial condition.
- (E) If the State Bar determines that a licensee is ineligible to scale, the licensee must pay full annual license fees and any late payment penalties.

*Rule 2.15 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective July 20, 2007; amended effective November 15, 2013; amended effective January 25, 2019; amended effective January 1, 2020; amended effective September 22, 2023.*

### **Rule 2.16 Waivers**

- (A) In this rule, "annual license fees" and "penalties" are construed narrowly and do not include
  - (1) disciplinary costs<sup>2</sup> or monetary sanctions,<sup>3</sup>
  - (2) Client Security Fund disbursements and costs,<sup>4</sup>
  - (3) mandatory fee arbitration award penalties and costs,<sup>5</sup>
  - (4) Minimum Continuing Legal Education ("MCLE") noncompliance or reinstatement penalties, or
  - (5) any other charges that may be added to annual license fees for failure to comply with obligations imposed by court order, statute, or rule.
- (B) To be considered for the current year, a request for a waiver under this rule must be submitted on or before the deadline for payment of annual license fees as set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines. Requests submitted after the deadline for payment of annual license fees, as set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines, must be accompanied by full payment of any outstanding charges, which will be refunded if the request is granted.

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<sup>2</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6086.10.

<sup>3</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6086.13.

<sup>4</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6140.5.

<sup>5</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6203(d)(3).

- (C) The Secretary may waive up to \$1,000 in annual license fees and related penalties for the year in which they are due, provided that the request is
- (1) in writing;
  - (2) supported by satisfactory documentation; and
  - (3) for any of the following reasons:
    - (a) the licensee serves full-time as a magistrate, commissioner, or referee for a state or federal court of record;
    - (b) the licensee is a retired judge who accepts assignments from the Chief Justice of California to act in a judicial capacity at least 90% of the calendar year; or
    - (c) the licensee has a total gross annual household income from all sources of \$20,000 or less, in which case the waiver is 50% of annual license fees.
- (D) The Secretary may waive annual license fees and related penalties for a licensee serving in the Army National Guard, the Army Reserve, the Naval Reserve, the Marine Corps Reserve, the Air National Guard of the United States, the Air Force Reserve, or the Coast Guard Reserve provided that
- (1) the licensee has been ordered to report to full-time active duty for more than thirty days;
  - (2) a request for waiver is submitted in writing by the licensee, licensee's spouse, relative, law partner or associate, or legal representative and accompanied by:
    - (a) a copy of the order to report for active duty, or
    - (b) a copy of the order to report for active duty and a certified declaration by a JAG officer that the licensee has served on active duty for more than thirty days.
- A licensee granted a waiver under this rule must notify the State Bar within thirty days upon termination of the assignment to active duty.
- (E) Annual license fees are waived for the year in which a judicial officer leaves office and returns to active or inactive status in the State Bar.
- (F) Annual license fees are waived for licensees on inactive status who are 70 years of age or older on the deadline for payment of annual license fees set forth in the Schedule of Charges and Deadlines.

- (G) Annual license fees may be waived for a licensee who is enrolled in the Pro Bono Practice Program.<sup>6</sup>
- (H) The board reserves the right for good cause
  - (1) to grant requests for waivers denied by the Secretary; and
  - (2) to consider all other requests for waivers.
- (I) A waiver granted under this rule does not remove a court-ordered suspension for nonpayment of fees or penalties.

*Rule 2.16 adopted effective June 17, 2006; amended effective July 20, 2007; amended effective July 17, 2009; amended effective July 22, 2011; amended effective March 2, 2012; amended effective July 20, 2012; amended effective January 25, 2019; amended effective November 14, 2019; amended effective November 14, 2024.*

### **Rule 2.17 Keller deductions and challenges**

- (A) *Keller v. State Bar of California* (1990) 496 U.S. 1 prohibits the State Bar from charging licensees for State Bar expenses for lobbying and certain other activities deemed political and ideological and unrelated to the Bar’s permissible goals. California law authorizes licensees to take a deduction for lobbying activities.<sup>7</sup> The Board of Trustees may also identify each year additional deductions that it deems to be outside the scope of *Keller*. The State Bar restricts its spending on lobbying and other activities it deems outside the scope of *Keller* to fees paid voluntarily by licensees not taking the deductions. The deductions and the Bar’s most recent audited expenses charged to mandatory license fees are published as a Statement of Expenditures of Mandatory License Fees on the State Bar website when the State Bar mails invoices for annual license fees. Notice is also provided in the California Bar Journal and licensees may request a copy of the statement by mail.
- (B) Licensees who believe that the annual Statement of Expenditures of Mandatory License Fees inappropriately includes an expenditure disallowed by *Keller* may object to the expenditure. The objection must be filed using the Challenge to Mandatory License Fees. The board may allow the objection or promptly refer it to arbitration. Filing an objection does not relieve a licensee of the obligation of paying the invoiced annual mandatory license fees on time.
- (C) For purposes of this rule, “arbitration” means that the State Bar will refer the challenge to an arbitrator selected by the American Arbitration Association. The State Bar may consolidate multiple challenges. The arbitration procedure is specified in the instructions to the Challenge to Mandatory License Fees.

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<sup>6</sup> See rules 3.325–3.330.

<sup>7</sup> Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6140.05.

- (D) If an arbitrator determines that a challenged expense is outside the scope of Keller and is allowable as a deduction, the State Bar will refund the amount of the deduction to any public agency that has paid the amount on behalf of a licensee.

*Rule 2.17 adopted effective July 20, 2007; amended effective January 1, 2012; amended effective January 25, 2019.*

**Rule 2.18 Payment by credit card, debit card, or electronic funds transfer**

The State Bar is authorized to charge licensees who choose to pay annual license fees by credit card, debit card, or electronic funds transfer an additional fee to defray the costs incurred by that election. The State Bar's Executive Director or his or her designee is authorized to set the amount of any additional fee the State Bar is authorized to charge licensees under this rule.

*Rule 2.18 adopted effective December 6, 2016; amended effective January 25, 2019.*