



## CHICAGO COUNCIL OF LAWYERS SUPPORTS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STANDARDS FOR LAW SCHOOLS

The Chicago Council of Lawyers (CCL)<sup>1</sup> believes that institutional diversity remains critical to ensuring the legal profession accurately reflects a multiracial democracy. As the Illinois State Bar Association notes, “Because we are a diverse nation, we need lawyers with diverse backgrounds to interpret and draft the law within our Constitutional frame-work.”<sup>2</sup>

Law schools that maintain practices supporting diversity and inclusion strengthen their students’ preparation for practice and their competitiveness in the profession. Effective client service requires attorneys to understand the people they serve, including their cultural backgrounds, communication needs, and experiences with institutions.<sup>3</sup> As the population becomes more diverse, schools that prepare graduates to meet those needs will better position them to succeed. Sustaining these practices, and ensuring that talented and qualified people from different backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to enter the profession, is an investment in graduates’ readiness, the schools’ relevance, and the profession’s long-term ability to serve the public.

The ABA Accreditation Council (ABA), through its Standard 206, had required accredited law schools to show that they have taken “concrete action” to promote and epitomize diversity within the student body and faculty.<sup>4</sup> The ABA has now repealed Standard 206 under threats from the Trump Administration that the ABA might lose its federal accreditation authority for law schools.<sup>5</sup>

The ABA’s decision to repeal Section 206 has been criticized by legal organizations. The Legal Defense Fund (LDF) asserts that “instilling faith in the legal system” is “essential,” arguing that “Standard 206 helped advance that important goal.”<sup>6</sup> LDF and

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<sup>1</sup> The Chicago Council of Lawyers is a non-partisan, member-based organization that pursues pro bono systemic reform projects for the benefit of underserved populations and evaluates state and federal judicial candidates in Chicago. See Chicago Council of Lawyers, About Us, <https://chicagocouncil.org/about-us/>.

<sup>2</sup> Why Diversity Matters . . . , Ill. State Bar Ass’n, Diversity Leadership Council Newsletter (June 2008), <https://www.isba.org/committees/diversityleadershipcouncil/newsletter/2008/06/whydiversitymatters>.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Muchman, The Effective Lawyer: Communication, Cultural Competence, and Civility, 31 Pub. Law., no. 1, Winter 2023, [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/government\\_public/resources/public-lawyer/2023-winter/effective-lawyer-communication-cultural-competence-civility/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/government_public/resources/public-lawyer/2023-winter/effective-lawyer-communication-cultural-competence-civility/).

<sup>4</sup> Am. Bar Ass’n, Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools ch. 2 (2025–2026), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal\\_education\\_and\\_admissions\\_to\\_the\\_bar/standards/2025-2026/2025-2026-standards-chapter-2.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/standards/2025-2026/2025-2026-standards-chapter-2.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Accreditation Council, Law School Accreditation Standard 206 Formally Repealed (Sept. 8, 2026), [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal\\_education\\_and\\_admissions\\_to\\_the\\_bar/2026/2026-september-standard-206-decision.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/2026/2026-september-standard-206-decision.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> LDF Condemns ABA Decision Repealing Standard 206 That Advanced Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Law Schools and the Legal Profession and Calls on Law Schools to Continue Pursuit of These Lawful Goals, Legal Def. Fund (Sept. 2026), <https://www.naacpldf.org/news/ldf-condemns-aba->



other critics warn that removing these mandates risks creating a demographic imbalance that could strain public trust in the legal system. The New York State Bar Association similarly opposes the rollback, viewing diversity implementation as a direct catalyst to “the success of America’s business and civic institutions.”<sup>7</sup>

The CCL opposes the ABA’s decision to repeal Section 206 because we believe that it might weaken law schools’ commitment to the important goals of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. We urge the ABA to reconsider and reverse its action. But regardless of whether the ABA reverses its action, individual law schools should continue their policies that foster diversity and inclusion.

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<sup>7</sup> N.Y. State Bar Ass’n, New York State Bar Association Urges American Bar Association to Keep Diversity Standards in Law School Accreditation (June 29, 2026), <https://nysba.org/new-york-state-bar-association-urges-american-bar-association-to-keep-diversity-standards-in-law-school-accreditation/>.