

# AMERICAN BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE JOURNAL

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## ABC Update

BY CANDACE C. CARLYON

### Now Is the Time!

#### ABI Supports Certification with Unveiling of ABC Prep Course

The concept of a national certification program for experienced and capable bankruptcy attorneys came about largely through the initiative of ABI. In the early 1990s, ABI's leadership worked to develop a program to certify bankruptcy practitioners on a national scale. Dovetailing with similar efforts by the Commercial Law League of America, the American Bankruptcy Board of Certification was established on Jan. 1, 1998, later becoming the American Board of Certification (ABC). Since then, more than 1,000 attorneys have successfully completed its requirements for certification.

Recognition of the importance of certification was (again, largely through ABI's support) given by Congress when in 2005, § 330(a)(3)(E) was added, directing judges to consider "whether the person is board certified or otherwise has demonstrated skill and expertise in the bankruptcy field" in awarding fees. An example of such recognition is the "no-look" chapter 13 fee in Michigan, which ranges from \$2,600 for attorneys who have not demonstrated substantial CLE to \$3,650 for certified attorneys. Since certified bankruptcy specialists must (1) demonstrate at least five years of experience in a variety of matters related to specialization, (2) complete at least 60 hours of continuing legal education in bankruptcy, (3) pass an examination including general bankruptcy, area of specialty (consumer or business) and ethics, and (4) pass ethical and peer review standards, certification is a way of demonstrating experience and competence. As an illustration of the quality of certified attorneys, ABC is proud to count 30 judges among its ranks.

While most bankruptcy attorneys recognize the value of certification, many are hesitant to complete the certification process. The most-given reason is trepidation over taking the examination. While the examination is an essential part of demonstrating competence, attorneys (who need to have completed at least seven years of higher education and passed at least one bar examination) are often hesitant to subject themselves to the uncertainty of having their work graded once again.

This year, again through the generous support of ABI, a web-based CLE course has been made available for those contemplating taking the ABC examination. The course, which also provides six hours of CLE credit (including one hour of ethics), is available on demand at [abi.org/abcprep](http://abi.org/abcprep).

Attorneys taking the prep course also benefit from a limited-time economic incentive to apply for certification now. ABI members who pay \$295 for the course receive a \$395 discount off the \$495 certification application fee. In addition, for attorneys taking the examination at the ABI 2015 Winter Leadership Conference or the 2016 Annual Spring Meeting, ABC will waive the \$125 examination fee. For three attorneys taking the examination together, the ABC will currently waive the examination fee and administer the examination at a location chosen by the applicants. As I conclude my service on the ABC Board of Directors in my current term as chair, I am very pleased to have been a part of this organization, and to have played a part in fulfilling the goal of having the prep course available.

Certification has enhanced my life — both personally and professionally — and I encourage all of you to consider joining me and my skilled colleagues as a certified bankruptcy professional. In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation to **Dian Gilmore** and **Pamela Farmer** of the ABC, and to all my fellow officers and board members who have contributed so much to the enhancement of our profession through the time and effort dedicated to the American Board of Certification of Bankruptcy and Creditors' Rights Attorneys. **abi**

*Reprinted with permission from the ABI Journal, Vol. XXXIV, No. 12, December 2015.*

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