

# Law students testify for reform in licensing practices

University School of Law students Thursday testified before the Sunset Advisory Commission against allegedly unfair attorney licensing practices.

Law Students for Impartial and Efficient Attorney Licensing Practices hope the commission will pass recommendations to the Legislature to reform licensing practices in several major areas.

The commission is holding public hearings on the State Bar of Texas and the Board of Law Examiners. The commission reviews state agencies and recommends to the Legislature whether to continue them.

"The problem with the licensing procedure now is that every law school student is required to submit to an in-

vestigation of his or her moral character that is a broad invasion of their privacy," Elizabeth Alston, president of the group, said Thursday.

Alston said questions regarding a student's marital status, counseling for emotional difficulties and purged law enforcement are "of no legitimate interest to the bar."

Answers to these questions

"have no relevance on a person's ability to practice law," she added.

Presently, each Texas law student is required to pay \$75 for two investigations, one in the first year of law school and another before taking the bar exam.

The group wants the second investigation dropped and the fee for the first investigation reduced.

"The cost of this moral investigation is higher than any other in-state investigation in the country," Alston said.

If the first investigation was better organized and the second one limited to simply checking up on students, the cost would go down, she added.

Alston said a lot of duplication is involved in the investigations, resulting in

"paper shuffling that doesn't need to be there."

The purpose of the first investigation is to let a student know early in his career whether he is eligible to take the bar exam, Alston said.

A student's investigation often is not completed until his or her third year, so it makes little sense to re-investigate him, she said.

When a first-year law student is being investigated, he may be called before any of 17 State Bar district committees, which differ in the depth of questioning, Alston said.

Sometimes students are forced to appear at distant meetings on short notice during the week.

She said the 17 committees should be consolidated into six

which would be located in the same cities as Texas' law schools.

The University Student Bar Association has passed resolutions supportive of the group's efforts. Also, a meeting of student bar associations from every law school in the state endorsed the group, according to a press release issued by the group.

