

Welcome and Introduction

by Tracy A. Giles, Chair, Young Lawyers Conference

I am delighted that this issue of the *Virginia Lawyer* highlights some of the many programs and activities of the Young Lawyers Conference. The YLC membership includes all Virginia lawyers under 36 years old, and those, regardless of age, who have been admitted to their first bar for fewer than three years. With over 8,800 active members, the YLC is the Virginia State Bar's largest section. It is also among the most active.

Since my first involvement in the YLC, I have been constantly amazed at the amount of time and energy spent by young lawyers to fulfill our mission. This is often precious time spent away from law practices, families and pressing obligations. The only compensation is the satisfaction of completing a job well done, of making Virginia a little better place in which to live and practice law and (maybe) a paperweight with your name on it.

I also continue to be humbled by the talent brought to the table by YLC volunteers. Each year the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division gives "Awards of Achievement" to recognize the most outstanding of its 300 affiliates. The Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference competes against the largest young lawyer organizations in the country. Every year that I can remember, the YLC has won first or second place—in both the service to the bar and service to the public categories, and the YLC newsletter, *Docket Call* consistently wins. The only group to give us a run for our money was the Texas Young Lawyers. It has four times our membership and ten times our budget.

The Young Lawyers Conference was organized to "serve as a vehicle through which the younger members of the Virginia State Bar can exert a more direct influence upon the activities of the Virginia State Bar; to engage in activities designed to respond to discernible needs among the younger members of the bar in particular and the members of the legal profession in general; to promote, uphold, and elevate the standards of honor, integrity, and competence in the legal profession and to assist the Council of the Virginia State Bar in discharging its duty to improve the legal profession; and the responsiveness of the profession to the members of the public, for whose benefit the profession exists."

YLC programs and activities include the Emergency Legal Services Program, the Virginia Domestic Violence Safety Project, Students' Day at the Capitol, Pathways to Leadership and the Celebration of Women & Minorities in the Profession Dinner. They are described in the articles that follow. Other programs and activities benefiting the public include No Bills Night, Law Talk, Community Law Week, distribution and translation of the *Senior Citizens Handbook* and the Peer Mediation Project. The YLC sponsors the *Docket Call*, the Admission and Orientation Ceremony, the First Day in Practice Seminar, the National Trial Advocacy Competition, the Minority Pre-Law Project and career and professionalism programs for young lawyers.

Additional information about the YLC can be found at its Web site, <http://www.vsb.org/sections/yl/index.html>.

As we should be, many of us are involved in other bar associations that reflect our background and special interests, but the Virginia State Bar Young Lawyers Conference is a home for all young lawyers in Virginia. Our diversity is our strength. It does not matter to us who you are, what you look like, where you're from, how big or small your firm is, what your practice area is or whether you are a third or first generation lawyer. All we care about is talent. I believe it is important to note that this diversity of membership is reflected in our leadership. My predecessor works at one of the largest firms in Virginia, while I practice law with one partner, my wife. I happen to be white, my successor is African-American. The immediate past chair, and the chair before, were women.

Our profession faces many challenges, including the possibility of multidisciplinary practices, the effects of technology and the Internet, the seeming loss of civility, threats to self regulation and judicial independence and the need for the profession to fully reflect the diversity of the population. No group has more at stake in meeting these challenges than young lawyers. Only through involvement can young lawyers expect to influence the responses to these issues. Apathy is the road to disaster.

If you are a young lawyer who has talent and a dedication to service, the Young Lawyers Conference needs you to help us fulfill our commitment to serve the public and the profession. I encourage you to become actively involved in the Young Lawyers Conference—to enjoy its many opportunities for personal and professional development, and public service. If you are no longer a young lawyer, I invite you to support the Young Lawyers Conference, to participate in our programs, and to support the participation of young lawyers in the activities of the Virginia State Bar. ☺



Tracy A. Giles is president of the Young Lawyers Conference. Giles has served on the YLC Board of Governors since 1996—as member-at-large, secretary and president-elect. He chaired the Emergency Legal Services Committee of the YLC, and received the Edwin R. Burnette, Jr. Young Lawyer of the Year award in 1996. In addition, Giles has been on the board of governors of the American Bar since 1997. He practices law in

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