

Getting to Know the Litigation Section

by Jennifer L. Parrish

Until I became a member of the Litigation Section Board of Governors, I had no real idea of what the Virginia State Bar Litigation Section really did and why it benefitted me, other members of the bar, and the public at large. Now, in my job as section chair, I am often convinced that I still have no idea what we do. We have so many projects being handled by so many selfless volunteers that it can be difficult to keep track of them all. I hope you get to know us, and I encourage you to either join or become more active.

The Litigation Section, with more than 2,800 members, is the largest section in the Virginia State Bar. Our board of governors comprises thirteen lawyers and three judges.

Highlighted below is a sampling of some of the projects and accomplishments of our section.

Law In Society Essay Contest

One of the most important projects our section funds each year is the Law in Society Award Competition, an essay contest for Virginia high school students. Essays address a topic related to law that is developed by the VSB Special Committee on Publications and Public Information. The current contest receives logistical assistance from the Virginia Department of Education. Section members score the essays and present prizes and awards to the winners. This year's topic for the students is "Safety or Censorship: Do Internet Filters Help or Hinder Education?"

Continuing Legal Education

The Litigation Section sponsors a continuing legal education workshop at the VSB annual meeting in June, and a CLE program at the bar's Midyear Legal Seminar.

Section Secretary Robert L. Garnier will present "Stop Talking Like a Lawyer — The Lost Arm of Communication in Mediation, Negotiation, and Litigation" at the June meeting. Lawyers will gain practical insights and skills to resolve conflicts, build rapport, create favorable impressions, enhance credibility, and persuade.

The tentative topic for the Midyear Legal Seminar is "Winning Your Case in Discovery." Because of what some term as the "disappearing jury trial," we may focus on winning strategies to use in discovery.

Newsletter

In 2008, our section said goodbye to long-term Newsletter Chair Kevin W. Holt, who did a stellar job for many years. Our new newsletter chair, Joseph M. Rainsbury, took over with the fall 2008 newsletter. In each newsletter, our section writes articles of interest to litigation lawyers and reviews current law review articles.

Appellate Practice Subcommittee

For several years, the section's appellate practice subcommittee has been chaired by Steven L. Emmert. Our new chair is Monica T. Monday. Steve has moved mountains by single-handedly bringing the number of subcommittee members to more than fifty this past year. More than fifty lawyers from the public and private sector attended the subcommittee's Appellate Summit in 2008 and received four hours of CLE credit. Supreme Court Justice Lawrence L. Koontz Jr. and Virginia Court of Appeals Judge Robert P. Frank spoke candidly about what does and does not work in their respective courts. The seminar included cutting-edge presentations on interlocutory appeals and the Supreme Court's new crackdown on specificity in assignments of error.

The appellate practice subcommittee also formed two committees to plan future symposia and summits. The section's appellate handbook also will be revised by the subcommittee, after we see what changes the Supreme Court of Virginia makes to the rules.

Website

The Litigation Section maintains a website at <http://www.vsb.org/site/sections/litigation>. You can view the website by going to vsb.org. From there, you can download a membership application and read the Litigation Section's newsletters.

Long-range Planning Committee

VSB President Manuel A. Capsalis is preparing a five-year strategic plan for the Virginia State Bar. He has requested that each section formulate its own five-year plan. We have formed a long-range planning committee for this purpose, headed by Vice Chair Gregory J. Haley.

Young Lawyer Committee

Our Young Lawyer Committee has a new chair, Nathan J.D. Veldhuis of Charlottesville. This committee has conducted exemplary seminars across the commonwealth.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Litigation Section.