

VSB Seeks Comment on Diversity Recommendations

Editor's Note: This article was published previously in the March edition of the Virginia Lawyer Register.

THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR is seeking public comment on proposals that would broaden the agency's responsibilities to include promotion of diversity in the legal profession. The VSB Council will consider the proposals at its meeting on June 18, 2009, in Virginia Beach.

Comments should be submitted in writing to Karen A. Gould, Executive Director, Virginia State Bar, 707 East Main

Street, Suite 1500, Richmond, VA 23219, no later than end of business on May 26, 2009.

The recommendations were developed by the Diversity Task Force appointed by VSB President Manuel A. Capsalis. Chaired by former president Joseph A. Condo, the task force convened for the first time on July 28, 2008.

Proposed Amendments to Virginia State Bar Mission Statement;

Rules of Court, Part 6, § IV, ¶ 9;

Rules of Court, Part 6, § IV, ¶ 5;

Bylaws of Council, Part II, Article VI, § 1;

Proposed Bylaws for Diversity Conference

The proposals, recommended by the Diversity Task Force, would amend the bar's mission statement, establish a Diversity Conference, and designate a new seat on the VSB Council and Executive Committee for the conference's chair.

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The proposals are:

- To amend the VSB Mission Statement to add a diversity component. The revised statement would be:

The mission of the Virginia State Bar, as an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Virginia, is (1) to regulate the legal profession of Virginia; (2) to advance the availability and quality of legal services provided to the people of Virginia; and (3) to assist in improving the legal profession and the judicial system; and (4) to promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.

- To amend the powers of the Virginia State Bar Council to include a power to "encourage and promote diversity in the profession and the judiciary." See Proposed Addition to Paragraph 9, Organization and Government of the VSB, at <http://www.vsb.org/site/news/item/diversity/#par9>.
- To establish a Diversity Conference with a mission to "(1) foster and encourage diversity in the admission to the bar and advancement in the legal profession and the judiciary;

(2) serve as a catalyst for creating leadership and bar service opportunities in the legal profession in Virginia; and (3) work to ensure that the legal system is responsive to the legal needs of the people of Virginia." The conference's members would include local or specialty bar associations, law schools, and individual lawyers. The conference would be governed by a board, with a budget approved annually by the VSB Budget and Finance Committee. The board would comprise twelve governors elected by the conference members, three — including at least one layperson — appointed by the VSB president, and up to three elected as nonvoting honorary members. See Proposed Bylaws, VSB Diversity Conference, at <http://www.vsb.org/site/news/item/diversity/#bylaws>.

- To add an ex officio seat designated for the chair of the Diversity Conference on the VSB Council and its executive committee. The council at present consists of eighty members, including three officers, and the executive committee has twelve members. See Proposed Amendment to Paragraph 5, Organization and Government of the VSB, at <http://www.vsb.org/site/news/item/diversity/#P5>. Also, Proposed Amendment to Article VI, VSB Council Bylaws, at <http://www.vsb.org/site/news/item/diversity/#VI>.