

Conference of Local Bar Associations

by Gifford Ray Hampshire, Chair



Local Bar Associations Celebrate Law Day

MAY 1 IS LAW DAY, originally established in 1958 by proclamation of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to strengthen our heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under the law. <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/lawday/2007/history/history.shtml>

Law Day was conceived as a counter-celebration to the May Day observance in the former Soviet Union. Although its origins were during the Cold War, Law Day remains relevant for recognizing the importance of the rule of law in our society.

Many local bar associations throughout the commonwealth celebrate Law Day. One purpose of the Conference of Local Bar Associations (CLBA) is to act as a clearinghouse for local bar projects that can be copied and tailored to other legal communities. I pass some of these celebrations along as models for celebrating Law Day in your legal community.

The Prince William County Bar Association celebrates Law Day by sending lawyers to speak to high school classes about the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. During these ceremonies, the lawyers hand out the Virginia State Bar's *So You're 18* booklet. This program is now conducted in conjunction with a voter registration drive. The bar association also has implemented a project in which lawyers visit area senior centers, give presentations, and distribute the VSB *Senior Citizens Handbook*.

The Virginia Beach Bar Foundation organizes a Law Day Gala that features

a reception and speaker. In 2008, for example, Clay Jenkinson, a humanities scholar, appeared in the persona of Thomas Jefferson and spoke about the rule of law. Each year, the gala raises funds for the foundation, which sponsors projects to meet the legal needs of the poor, educate about law, and support efficiency and integrity of the judicial process and administration of justice.

In 2006, the Roanoke Bar Association sponsored a Senior Citizen Law Day, which included distribution of the *So You're 18* and *Senior Citizens* handbooks. The seminar was cosponsored by the League of Older Americans, which also provided space and refreshments. The bar association distributed the *Senior Citizens Handbook* to more than 150 attendees.

The Roanoke Bar Association also celebrates Law Day through an annual black-tie gala at the Hotel Roanoke. Similar to the Virginia Beach program, the Roanoke event features a speaker on the importance of the rule of law. Speakers have included Supreme Court justices and Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges. Proceeds go to the Roanoke Bar Association Foundation, which provides scholarships for legal studies and funds charitable causes.

In 2009, the Richmond chapter of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association celebrated Law Day by sponsoring a one-hour ethics continuing legal education program at the University of Richmond School of Law. At the conclusion of the seminar, the

chapter's first summer public service fellowship award was presented, followed by a wine-and-cheese reception.

In 2008, the Fredericksburg Area Bar Association celebrated Law Day with a program titled Reviving Law Day, which returned to the association's past practice of providing speakers at area high schools.

The Fairfax Bar Association Law Day celebrations this year will include a five-kilometer Run for Justice. Proceeds will go to the Fairfax Law Foundation, which sponsors charitable causes.

In Fairfax, Law Day also is celebrated annually by the law firm of Weiner, Rohstaff & Spivey PC through its annual Weiner Roast. The event is held in the firm's parking lot across from the courthouse, and features a jazz band, food (including hot dogs), and drink. The event also raises funds for the Fairfax Law Foundation. This year's proceeds are designated to support courthouse tours for local middle school children.

Through these sorts of activities, local bar associations demonstrate the good works of lawyers and the importance of the rule of law, consistent with President Eisenhower's intent. If your bar association has not yet instituted a Law Day program, I encourage you to consider how the above examples might be applied in your community on May 1, 2010. Your members and the community they serve will benefit from your efforts.