

# Supreme Court of Virginia Recognizes VSb's 75th Anniversary

On June 4, Supreme Court of Virginia Chief Justice Cynthia D. Kinser delivered remarks in recognition of the 75th anniversary of the Virginia State Bar. Her remarks from the bench were followed by a statement from VSb President Sharon D. Nelson.

Following are excerpts from their written remarks.

Chief Justice Kinser:

The bar was founded in 1938 . . . to promulgate codes of ethics and procedures for the disciplining of attorneys. Thirteen years earlier, the president of the Virginia Bar Association had remarked on the need for an integrated bar and he said: "There are more good lawyers today than ever before and there is a grievous swarm of poor ones." I am confident that today there are still more good lawyers than ever before but there is no longer a swarm of poor ones. . . .

The first secretary/treasurer, Richard E. Booker, . . . was tasked to locate all the lawyers in the commonwealth. Mr. Booker consulted with "every available source for the names of all lawyers practicing in Virginia whose membership in the bar was made compulsory by the rules," and of course he did not have the benefit of Google and Facebook. Mr. Booker did so well that in the bar's first year, 2,664 attorneys became members of the bar, paying yearly dues in the grand sum of \$3.50. We have indeed come a long way in many respects. Today, the Virginia State Bar has approximately 50,000 members across the commonwealth and tracking down attorneys in that fashion is thankfully no longer necessary.

Some of the highlights of the bar's first seventy-five years include the following: during World War II more than

700 members served, and eighteen gave their lives; in 1950, the bar recommended that state law require three years of law school; in 1973, the Young Lawyers Conference was organized; in 1990, the first Pro Bono Award was given to retired Justice Lewis Powell; in 1992, the first Conclave on Legal Education took place; in 1996, the bar created its first website; and in 2006, the legal research product Fastcase® was added to the bar as a member benefit — one that I wish had been there when I was a solo practitioner.

We are blessed with many excellent legal organizations in the commonwealth and the Virginia State Bar has certainly done its part throughout its history to ensure the high quality of the legal profession in the commonwealth. The bar has accomplished this through its focus on professionalism, legal ethics, civility, its continuing legal education, and through its many conferences and events. . . . When I consider the responsibilities of the Virginia State Bar, its programs, its committees, its conferences, its partnerships in the community, and when I contemplate how the bar and its work has helped all of us in our careers, I am exceedingly grateful for its hard work. On behalf of all of the justices, I extend our congratulations and appreciation to the Virginia State Bar and to all of the current and former officers, council members, and staff, all of whom have served the bar with distinction in its seventy-five year history. . . .

President Nelson:

Thank you very much, Chief Justice Kinser. Honorable justices and ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank the Court for recognizing the 75th Anniversary of the Virginia State Bar today. . . .

On behalf of the bar, I thank this Court for the wonderful relationship that the bar has had with all of you. On many fronts, we have collaborated in ways that have helped the bar and protected the public. We also thank the voluntary bars who are our partners in so many endeavors. Our relationship with those bars has deepened over the years to the benefit of all as they can advocate where we cannot. We are grateful to the VSb staff, all of whom understand that the VSb is first and foremost a member organization, dedicated to providing ethics support to its members and opportunities for bar service, while protecting the public. They do it all well, graciously, and always with a smile. . . .

The bar owes a debt of gratitude to many of you for your service to our profession. I would be here all day if I tried to recount all of your acts of service. But I would be remiss if I didn't personally thank Chief Justice Kinser, who was kind enough to swear me in as president. She confers constantly with the bar on many issues and we are so grateful that she continues to participate in the Bench Bar Conferences that were the hallmark of David Harless's presidency. She has consistently been an eloquent advocate for filling our judicial vacancies and she works tirelessly on a host of other issues.

In closing, in spite of the many challenges our profession faces, the collaboration between the bar and the Supreme Court gives me hope that together we can genuinely be, at least in part, architects of the future of our profession. Speaking for all of the bar guests here today, we thank the Court for the opportunity to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Virginia State Bar in the commonwealth's highest court. Thank you all for inviting us to be with you this morning.