

Conference of Local Bar Associations

by William T. Wilson, Chair



Solo & Small-Firm Practitioners Forum Continues to Appeal

I BRING YOU GREETINGS from the executive committee of the Conference of Local Bar Associations (CLBA). We have had a great year. By the time you read this, we will have concluded two successful Solo and Small-Firm Practitioner Forums. They took place in May at Shenandoah University in Winchester and in July at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon. Speakers for the events included Virginia State Bar Ethics Counsel James M. McCauley. Joseph A. Condo of McLean, a former VSB president, talked about how to deal with stress in the practice of law. Monica T. Monday of Roanoke provided helpful advice on how to protect the record for appeal, and Sharon D. Nelson and John W. Simek of Fairfax provided valuable information about technology for small law firms. A lawyer stopped me in Winchester to tell me the forum was the best continuing legal education program he had ever attended.

The Bar Leaders Institute was held on April 15, 2009, at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. Approximately eight-five persons attended. Dr. Terry L. Price of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond evaluated the reasons leaders give to justify rule-breaking behavior — a topic addressed in his book, *Leadership Ethics: An Introduction*. Bob Harris, an expert in nonprofit associations, taught a three-hour workshop that covered topics such as a bar association's structure, governing documents, setting goals, and planning. Thomas E. Spahn spoke about Virginia's new Principles of Professionalism. A panel led by Edward

L. Weiner gave practical advice from experienced bar leaders — David P. Bobzien, Sandra M. Rohrstaff, and William L. Schmidt. The day concluded with an ethics CLE program on Lawyers Helping Lawyers by James E. Leffler and Susan S. Grover.

I am pleased to report that the annual meeting of the VSB at Virginia Beach was highly successful. The CLBA held its annual breakfast on June 19, 2009, and the executive committee wore Hawaiian shirts and leis. The Bar Leader of the Year Award went to Rupen R. Shah, a past president of the Augusta County Bar Association who has done many good works for his fellow lawyers and his community. (See page 60.) In addition, fourteen awards were presented to bar associations that carried out exceptional programs in the past year. The breakfast was well attended and we gave a big round of applause to Paulette J. Davidson and other VSB staff for their organizational skills.

Speaking of good programs, one of the flagship projects sponsored by the CLBA is a panel discussion by lawyers and others to explain the *So You're 18* handbook to high school juniors and seniors. The CLBA has a blueprint of the program for your use, and the handbooks can be sent to your bar associations. For details, contact Paulette Davidson at (804) 775-0521 or davidson@vsb.org.

As you may know by now, the diversity initiative passed by a large vote at the VSB Council meeting at Virginia Beach. We now have endorsed an additional conference, called the Diversity Conference, which is designed to promote diversity in the

legal profession and in the judiciary. The council also voted to give the chair of the conference a seat on the council but not on the VSB Executive Committee. A proposal to add a diversity component to the VSB mission statement was taken off the table by the Diversity Task Force that developed the proposals. There is no definition of "diversity" in the proposal, but those who sponsored the initiative seemed to think that everyone knows what it means. The funding for the Diversity Conference is supposed to come from private sources. There will be no bar dues money involved. I voted against the proposal, not because I think diversity is a bad thing, but because the word "diversity" was not defined and because it is a major step, in my judgment, away from the normal mission of the VSB. Having said that, however, I plan to join the Diversity Conference in the spirit of, hopefully, creating more diversity in the legal profession and the judiciary without establishing a quota system. We were told by the sponsors of the proposal that the Diversity Conference is not designed to create a quota system, but, unfortunately, we have no guidelines to help us define diversity, so it will be a challenge for us to determine exactly what it is that we are trying to do. Almost everyone agreed that diversity within the profession was a good thing, but the vagueness in the proposal caused a great deal of debate and concern. Hopefully, that concern is not well taken and the Diversity Conference will be successful. The proposal will be sent to the Supreme Court of Virginia for

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its approval. Development of the conference was a priority of Manuel A. Capsalis during his presidency in 2008–09.

Since this is my last column as your CLBA chair, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for letting me serve you. It has been quite a trip, but an enjoyable one. My thanks also go out to the members of the CLBA Executive Committee who have been hard-working and supportive: Gifford R. Hampshire, Nancy M. Reid, Edward L. Weiner, John Y. Richardson Jr., Mary M. Benzinger, Jack W. Burtch Jr.,

Sandra T. Chinn-Gilstrap, Plato George Eliades II, Eugene Millan Elliott Jr., Vanessa L. Jones, George W. Nolley, Susan F. Pierce, and Dillina W. Stickle. Of course, without steady guidance from Paulette J. Davidson, our VSB liaison, I would have been lost most of the time, so a big thank you goes out to her. Other VSB staff—Patricia A. Sliger, Mary Yancey Spencer, Toni B. Dunson, Valerie L. Breeden, Elizabeth L. Keller, Theresa B. Patrick and, of course, VSB Executive Director Karen A. Gould—have been invaluable to me and to the executive committee. I thank you all.

The CLBA is your organization and is designed to help you and your local bar associations. We have many resources and suggestions that will help you with your programs. To get help, all you need to do is contact Mrs. Davidson. In addition, if I can help, please contact me at (540) 962-4986 or wtw1130@aol.com. Your new CLBA chair is Gifford Ray Hampshire of Blankingship & Keith PC, 9300 West Courthouse Road, Suite 201, Manassas, VA 20100; (703) 365-9945; fax (703) 365-2203; ghampshire@bklawva.com. ■