



Improving Access to Justice and Pro Bono Services in Virginia

by Cynthia D. Kinser, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia

This issue of *Virginia Lawyer* focuses on the issues of access to justice and pro bono legal services. These matters deserve our attention and ongoing commitment. On behalf of the judiciary, I take this opportunity to stress the need for improving the availability and quality of pro bono legal services in the commonwealth.

We are privileged to be a part of the greatest legal system in the world — one that recognizes the inherent value of all persons and adheres to the rule of law. As much as our legal system is one to cherish and protect, it is also one we can improve. As attorneys and leaders in our communities across the commonwealth, we have the opportunity and responsibility to make that system accessible and responsive to all individuals, regardless of their circumstances. In my view, an

individual without access to justice and legal services is an unacceptable proposition.

Today, the commonwealth faces the dual challenges of an increase in individuals' legal needs with a decline in funding for the public services on which so many rely, including legal aid services. Thus, I stress to each of you the importance of providing pro bono legal services throughout your careers. It is our responsibility as members of the Virginia State Bar. May we all make every effort to use our gifts in service of those in need, to improve the lives of others, to strengthen our communities, and to preserve the rule of law in the commonwealth.

I thank you for your service as members of the Virginia State Bar.