

## OPEN LETTER TO ALL VIRGINIA LAWYERS

September 2005

All Virginians have been dismayed by the destruction, dislocation, and loss of life caused by Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. The Supreme Court of Virginia and the Virginia State Bar have had discussions with representatives of the judicial systems and bar organizations in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. We have also had discussions with representatives of the National Center for State Courts. We plan to offer assistance that will enable judicial systems and lawyers in the affected states to resume operations as soon as possible.

We hope that every Virginia lawyer will donate at least ten hours to help our fellow Americans who are in need. We believe that several thousand victims of the storm will relocate to Virginia and many of these persons will need legal assistance. The Virginia State Bar is making the services of its Lawyer Referral Service available with no consultation fee to storm victims. The Legal Services Corporation of Virginia has authorized its legal aid offices to waive financial eligibility requirements in order to provide limited services and referrals for storm victims in Virginia.

We do not expect Virginia lawyers to advise or counsel persons about matters of local law in the affected states. Disaster assistance centers will be opened and staffed by licensed lawyers from each state. Virginia lawyers who volunteer, however, will be offered free, convenient training and materials to assist them in providing basic information about government benefits that are available to hurricane victims who have relocated to Virginia. We will also provide training that will enable lawyers to advise victims about issues of Virginia law related to their relocation. Volunteers will receive CLE credits for attending training seminars. Training will be provided by the Young Lawyers Conference of the Virginia State Bar and the Young Lawyers Division of the Virginia Bar Association, who have partnered for more than a decade to deliver disaster emergency legal services in the aftermath of storms and floods.

We hope that every active member of the Virginia State Bar will volunteer to provide *pro bono* legal services to these fellow Americans. Please complete the form that accompanies this letter indicating your willingness to help. Thank you in advance for your commitment.

Very truly yours,



Leroy Rountree Hassell, Sr.  
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia



Phillip V. Anderson  
President, Virginia State Bar