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Letters to the Editor

Judicial Independence

I would like to add my support for our Bar President's call for judicial independence and integrity. I would add, however, that one of the linchpins of the judicial selection process in Virginia is the input of the local or statewide bar associations in the process. When I practiced in Prince William County I faithfully attended the bar elections for judicial nominees and took the process very seriously. I know many of my peers did as well. I have heard rumblings from several lawyers that the bar's selections are not taken as seriously by legislators. I certainly hope that is not generally true. I would rather believe that many legislators would value the input of attorneys on which one from among their own should sit as judge.

Therefore, I propose that any legislation reforming the judicial selection process include in the statute input from the appropriate bar associations. Enshrining the bar in the process adds a less political element to judicial selection while maintaining the ultimate decision with elected officials. There would be a limited period in which the bar would meet and nominate up to three persons (the bar could nominate no one) from among those applying for their nomination. The General Assembly would have the right to select a qualified person from outside the list.

I would be very hesitant to change a system that has served us well in an important respect—judicial integrity and honesty in Virginia is second to none. While partisan differences must be acknowledged, the bar has a duty to make sure only the most qualified be nominated for judge. Finally, there must be continued input at the time of reappointment from the local bar especially if some pressure group tries to remove a judge for reasons other than want of integrity or ability.

Sincerely Yours,

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VIRGINIA STATE BAR Mission Statement

The mission of the Virginia State Bar, as an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Virginia, is (1) to regulate the legal profession of Virginia; (2) to advance the availability and quality of legal services provided to the people of Virginia; and (3) to assist in improving the legal profession and the judicial system.