

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

The 2001–2002 bar year was a successful one for the Virginia State Bar in many ways. It has been my highest honor and privilege to serve as the bar's president. Much was accomplished, and the leadership has charted a future emphasizing enhanced services to both Virginia lawyers and the public we serve. What follows is a highlight of just a few of the many achievements.

Efficient Handling of Complaints Against Virginia Lawyers

In light of the increasing number of complaints lodged against Virginia lawyers and the finite resources available to the bar, the leadership determined that increasing the efficiency of the disciplinary system should be accorded the highest priority. With the assistance of experts both within and outside of the bar, the Subcommittee (of the Committee on Lawyer Discipline) on Disciplinary Efficiency was chartered, met several times and delivered its report to the Committee on Lawyer Discipline. The public's complaints against Virginia lawyers and respondent attorneys' legitimate interest in being vindicated of meritless allegations are being accorded this agency's highest priority.



By concentrated effort of the bar, we have begun to turn the tide of rising unresolved complaints. Just as significantly, the bar has a strategic plan now to manage its caseload more efficiently without the immediate necessity of increased staff. We are particularly grateful to our bar counsel, Barbara Williams, and her dedicated staff, the clerk of the disciplinary system, Barbara Lanier, and her fine group and the many volunteer attorneys and lay persons who serve on the district committees, disciplinary board, the "Miller Commission" that labored to consolidate procedural rules, the Committee on Lawyer Discipline (COLD) and the Subcommittee on Disciplinary Efficiency (SDE). The numbers indicate improvement on volume of cases resolved and on cost assessment collections. The Subcommittee on Disciplinary Efficiency needs to be institutionalized as a permanent subcommittee of COLD, because its mission will never be completed. The SDE should be constantly engaged in the business of suggesting refinements to the bar's disciplinary process—seeking to shorten the time frame from filing of complaint to final deposition, while insuring the integrity of the process. As the only self-regulated profession in Virginia, the primary mission of the Virginia State Bar must be the continued success and improvement of this critical regulatory function.

Computer System Upgrade

Another vital area of the bar's operations advanced considerably during the 2001–2002 year under the direction of Computer Committee Chair Dana McDaniel and his superb committee, including the bar's own Bill Dickinson. Dana McDaniel, one of the state's best attorneys in the area of software contracting, has devoted countless volunteer hours to the bar that otherwise would be billed at premium rates to willing clients.

The efforts of Dana and his committee that will persist through the 2002–2003 year will result in the development and implementation of an operating system that will power the bar for years and lay the groundwork for a vision of a more interactive relationship between the bar's 34,762 members and the agency. The bar's investment, which is expected to be completed within budget and on track, will pay dividends by operational efficiency and delivering of value to the membership of the bar and the public.

Multidisciplinary Practice Commission

After two and a half years of study and debate, the Council of the Virginia State Bar, in a 60 to 4 vote, overwhelmingly rejected the concept of multidisciplinary practice for the Virginia legal profession. We are grateful to former Virginia State Bar President John Keith and his colleagues on the commission for their study and for a vigorous debate on this issue.

The Bar's Other Missions Advanced

The professionalism course, for the first time ever, was introduced to all seven Virginia law schools during the 2001–2002, distinguishing Virginia as a leader.

The Senior Lawyers Conference, under the leadership of its initial chair, Frank O. Brown, Jr., is already contributing, in significant ways, to our profession and the public by elevating the profession and the quality of legal services provided in the Commonwealth.

The Young Lawyers Conference, lead by O'Kelly E. McWilliams III, had more than its share of opportunities to assist Virginians through its joint Emergency Legal Services program with The Virginia Bar Association. The September

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11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the airline crash into the Pentagon and flooding in southwest Virginia later in the year, were met with a generous outpouring of assistance by our bar—especially through our Young Lawyers Conference.

Improved Communication and Cooperation

On November 19, 2001, the Virginia State Bar hosted the initial meeting of the Presidents' Council, comprised of the presidents of major statewide bar associations. Rather than have redundancy of services offered by more than one bar, more coordination and communication among the leaders of the several statewide bar associations will result in savings to all and cooperation on legal issues of importance to all Virginians. The Presidents' Council will meet at least once annually. The Virginia Bar Association agreed to host the second meeting in the fall of 2002.

Emphasis on Family

The legal profession has more than its share of stresses. Lawyers are hired to deal with the problems and complexities of other people. Knowing this and the strength my own family gives me, I determined from the very beginning of my term that I would stress the importance of family. This began with the symbolism of our family portrait on the cover of the June/July 2001 *Virginia Lawyer* magazine and continued throughout the year in nearly every speech I delivered. This may not show up anywhere as a statistic or a benchmark, but I consider it my most valuable contribution to our profession this year.

There are numerous other successes and advances achieved by the Virginia State Bar this past year. There are many people who should be acknowledged and thanked for their contributions. Suffice it to say that the professional staff—from senior management to mail clerk—are superb. I have met them all and I am in awe of their dedication to this agency. The state of the bar is excellent. Our budget is in order, our staff is dedicated, our volunteers are tireless, our mission is clear, and our future is bright. The leadership of Bernard J. DiMuro as the bar's new president and Jean P. Dahnk, slated to become the bar's second female president in June, 2003, portends continued excellence and commitment to our core functions.

It has been the highest honor to lead the Virginia State Bar. The citizens of our Commonwealth can be proud of the work done by this superb agency.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael A. Glasser