

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BENCH-BAR RELATIONS

Gregory A. Giordano, chair

The mission of the committee is to improve the administration of justice, enhance service to the community and increase professionalism within the legal community by promoting the exchange of information and ideas between the judiciary and practicing attorneys of the commonwealth. The committee's activities range from the monitoring of changes in the judicial system to actual involvement in legal education programs for both judges and lawyers. The following projects were addressed during the Virginia State Bar year 2003–2004.

1. Orientation Video For Jurors

The Juror Orientation Video to be used by Circuit Courts statewide, was filmed and the final version of the video was distributed to all chief circuit court judges in January 2004.

2. Judicial Merit Selection and Retention

The committee continued to monitor legislation that effects the process of evaluating, nominating, electing or retaining judges and the effect on judicial independence. In this regard, the committee has contacted and had conferences with the chairs of the House and Senate Courts of Justice committees and is working with those leaders in an effort to maintain judicial independence in the selection process.

3. Regional Judicial Conferences

The committee's goal is to foster and provide resources and promote local bar association efforts to establish and broaden communications among the bench and the bar on a local and regional basis. In that regard, committee member Brian Buniva presented a program that was held on April 15, 2004, at the Southwest Virginia Regional Judicial Conference on the campus of Virginia Tech. The program focused on judicial merit selection and retention.

4. Annual Seminar at the VSB Annual Meeting

In conjunction with the Litigation Section of the Virginia State Bar, the Bench Bar Relations Committee presented a program on unbundled legal services. By all accounts, the program was well received. The Bench Bar Committee continues to work with various other state bar committees in studying this issue. At the present time, the committee is studying the report of the Unbundled Legal Services Subcommittee of the VSB's Special Committee on Access to Legal Services.

5. Other Projects

The committee maintains a notebook that contains project and seminar materials that were completed over several years by the committee.

