

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BENCH-BAR RELATIONS

Gregory A. Giordano, chair

The mission of the Bench-Bar Relations 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 monitoring changes in the judicial system to involvement in legal education programs for both judges and lawyers. The following matters or projects were addressed during the 2004–2005 Virginia State Bar year:

- **Judicial Merit Selection and Retention**—The committee will continue to monitor legislation that affects the process of evaluating, nominating, electing or retaining statewide judges and the legislation's effect on judicial independence.
- **Access to Legal Services and Unbundled Legal Services**—The committee continues to work with other state bar committees studying unbundled legal services
- **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. Committee member Brian L. Buniva gave a talk to the Region Three Judicial Conference on March 18, 2005, at the University of Richmond. The program concerned judicial merit selection and retention.
- **Annual Seminar at the VSB Annual Meeting**—In conjunction with the Litigation Section of the Virginia State Bar, the Bench-Bar Relations Committee presented the showcase continuing legal education program, "Dialogue on the American Jury." The program featured a panel discussion by the Honorable Johanna L. Fitzpatrick, Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia; Virginia Beach Chief Circuit Judge Thomas S. Shadrick; and attorneys Robert E. Scully Jr. and James O. Broccoletti regarding the current Virginia jury system and the potential impact of the American Bar Association "Principles for Juries and Jury Trials."

Following the panel discussion, ABA President Robert J. Grey Jr. lead the highly acclaimed and engaging dialogue, in which students from the First Colonial High School Legal Studies Academy explored the history of the jury system, issues confronting juries today, and landmark rulings on the jury and the questions they raise.

The program received high praise and accolades.

- **Other projects**—The committee maintains a notebook that contains project and seminar materials that it completed over several years. As always, it is the goal of the committee that this notebook will be used by judges and members of the state bar and local bar associations.

