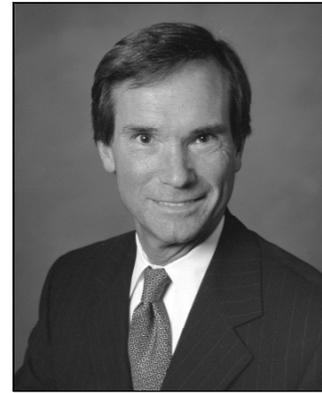


## REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Eric Severeid, the CBS Evening News anchor for many years, once analogized a certain organization to a coral reef, in that the coral reef was a vibrant organism that was very busy and ever-changing on the inside, but one that appeared quite immutable from the outside. At the risk of stretching the analogy too far, the Virginia State Bar has many of the characteristics of a coral reef. It is difficult from the outside to see and appreciate all of the tremendous and evolving work that goes on within the many conferences, committees, and sections and within the professional staff. The 2004–2005 bar year was no exception; outstanding work was accomplished for the benefit of the members, the judiciary, and the citizens of Virginia. Rather than attempt to catalogue all that went on within the organization, I would like briefly to recount the major themes of the recently ended bar year and my involvement in them.



This was the first bar year in which the VSB fully experienced its revitalized relationship with its parent Supreme Court of Virginia. My role in that revitalized relationship began with a meeting convened at the Supreme Court by the Chief Justice on November 30, 2004, to discuss ways of improving the involuntary commitment process. Those efforts will result in a conference of sheriffs, judges, special justices, lawyers, and mental health practitioners to be held on December 9, 2005, in Richmond, and that is just the beginning. A good portion of the bar year was devoted to planning two other major Supreme Court initiatives, the highly successful Solo and Small-Firm Practitioner Forum, which took place in Abingdon on March 18, 2005, and the excellent Indigent Defense Training Initiative, which was seen live in Richmond and on video in Abingdon on May 20, 2005. Like the efforts to improve the involuntary commitment process, focusing on the needs of solo practitioners and those who practice in a small-firm setting and the training needs of those who undertake indigent criminal defense will continue to be a priority of both the Supreme Court and the VSB.

One of the indicia of the revitalized relationship with the Supreme Court is the state bar's inclusion in court functions in its capacity as an administrative agency of the Supreme Court. On December 9, 2004, I was privileged to be included with Governor Mark R. Warner, Lieutenant Governor Timothy M. Kaine, Attorney General Jerry W. Kilgore, State Senator Kenneth W. Stolle, and Delegate H. Morgan Griffith in making congratulatory remarks to the Supreme Court during commemoration of its 225th anniversary. Later, on March 30, 2005, I was similarly honored by being given the opportunity to address the Virginia Court of Appeals on the observance of its twentieth anniversary. Then on April 30, I took part in the observance of the 250th birthday of John Marshall. Perhaps the most gratifying part of serving as president during the 2004–2005 bar year was my ability to travel throughout the state and to meet with the marvelous lawyers and law professors who serve the people of Virginia so unstintingly. From the Buchanan County Bar Association and the Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, to the Accomack County Bar Association on the Eastern Shore and the fledgling Liberty University School of Law in Lynchburg, I met some wonderful people, and I could not have been received more graciously. Those visits and the people I met will stay with me forever.

Much of the 2004–2005 bar year was spent preparing for the provision of an online computerized legal research tool to the members of the state bar, as a membership benefit. Those efforts culminated in the Supreme Court's issuance of a Rule of Court on June 13, 2005, that authorizes and directs the VSB to provide such a service. It is hoped that in the near future that service will become a reality. In other computer news, the Integrated Bar Information System at VSB headquarters came closer to completion. The membership and accounting modules are now complete, the mandatory continuing legal education module is scheduled for completion this winter, and the final professional regulation module should be finished by September 2006.

One of the best aspects of the Virginia State Bar is that it holds its annual meeting at the very start of summer at sunny (most of the time) Virginia Beach. This year was no exception and, for once, cool temperatures accompanied the sun. It was a great meeting, with the major credit for it going to the hard work of the professional staff and the fine-tuning of the program that occurred the year before during the monthly meetings of the Better Annual Meeting Committee, ably chaired by Past President Jeannie P. Dahnk. During Robert J. Grey Jr.'s recently concluded presidency of the American Bar Association, he stressed the importance of the American jury system and the service and sacrifices made by jurors. He created a Commission on the American Jury to establish modern jury principles. Governor Mark R. Warner had declared May 2–6, 2005, Juror Appreciation Week in Virginia, and the annual meeting was not to be outdone. This year's Showcase Continuing Legal Education program was entitled "The ABA Modern Jury Principles and the Virginia Jury," and a panel consisting of Gregory A. Giordano, Robert E. Scully, James O. Broccoletti, Circuit Judge Thomas S. Shadrack, and Virginia Court of Appeals Chief Judge Johanna L. Fitzpatrick engaged in a lively dis-

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cussion, followed by an exploration led by Robert Grey of the history of the jury system and issues confronting juries today. Participants included high school students from the Legal Studies Academy of First Colonial High School in Virginia Beach.

In closing, let me give special thanks to Jeannie Dahnk, Phillip V. Anderson, Karen A. Gould, and the members of the VSB Executive Committee and Council for their unwavering support and wise counsel throughout the year. I also want to thank Manuel A. Capsalis, Savalle C. Sims, and William Brice Smith for the incredible work they did during their year at the helm of their respective conferences. Lastly, let me thank Thomas A. Edmonds, Mary Yancey Spencer, Barbara A. Williams, Elizabeth L. Keller, Susan C. Busch and all of the other tireless staff members who keep it all together.

As I said on the evening of June 17 in Virginia Beach as I passed the gavel to Phil Anderson, this has been the best year in my thirty-four years of practicing law, and I will cherish the memories and you forever. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Bobzien