

BENCH-BAR RELATIONS

Gregory A. Giordano, chair

The purpose of the Special Committee on Bench-Bar Relations is to support and improve the administration of justice, enhance service to the community, and increase professionalism within the legal system by promoting the exchange of information and ideas between the judiciary and practicing lawyers of the commonwealth. The committee comprises eighteen members, including five members from the judiciary, and meets quarterly in Richmond.

The committee continued or initiated the following during the 2006-2007 year:

Judicial independence and merit selection and retention of judges: The committee believes that issues regarding judicial independence and the selection and reappointment of judges continue to merit the attention and advocacy of members of the bench and bar. The committee in fiscal 2007 focused on three initiatives related to these issues: (1) Members of the committee will prepare one or more opinion pieces for publication in major newspapers in the commonwealth for the purpose of increasing public awareness of this issue. (2) The committee has offered to provide speakers for regional judicial conferences and for conferences of statewide bar associations in the upcoming year to encourage continued appreciation for and dialogue on these issues. (3) The committee will explore potential continuing legal education programs to address these issues.

Bench-bar communications: The committee provided speakers for regional judicial conferences and meetings of the Virginia State Bar's Bar Leaders Institute to discuss formal and informal methods of facilitating communication between the bench and bar at the local level. The committee is also proposing to have speakers available to discuss with local bar leaders the VSB process for responding to unjust criticism of judges and the judicial system. The committee anticipates that these programs and communications with the regional judicial conferences and the bar leaders institute will continue in the upcoming year.

Continuing legal education: The Bench-Bar Relations Committee joined the Litigation and Criminal Law sections to sponsor a CLE seminar titled "Answering the Call: Striving for Professionalism and Happiness in Our Lives as Lawyers." The program was the showcase CLE presentation at the VSB Annual Meeting in June 2007 and was well-attended and received. The program featured a presentation by a speaker and a panel discussion. The panel included Joseph A. Condo and retired judge Ann Hunter Simpson.

