

## RESOLUTION OF FEE DISPUTES

*Frank W. Rogers, III, chair*

Fiscal 2007 was one of considerable accomplishment for the Special Committee for the Resolution of Fee Disputes, and of significant improvements to the Fee Dispute Resolution Program (FDRP) which it oversees. Efforts included:

- Revision of FDRP rules and guidelines to incorporate mediation as an alternative means for fee dispute resolution
- Continuing Legal Education-accredited training sessions in Richmond, Norfolk, Roanoke, and Fairfax
- Revitalization and strengthening of circuit committee structure and membership
- Training and retraining of volunteer attorney and nonattorney arbitrators
- Initial training of certified mediators
- Establishment of two new circuit committees
- Presentations about the FDRP to the Virginia State Bar Council and as a program element of the Fredericksburg and Roanoke Bar Leaders Institutes and Solo and Small-Firm Practitioner Forums

The committee is actively working on expanding the FDRP to circuits not presently served. At present, fifteen judicial circuits have active circuit committees. Contacts have been made with bar leaders in unserved circuits, and new circuit committees will most certainly be added in the upcoming year.

The committee continues to explore ways to raise awareness of the FDRP, and to promote utilization of the program by members of the public and by lawyers. Historically, attorneys have been unwilling to participate. If the FDRP is going to be ultimately successful, its use will need to be encouraged by the bar's leadership and by judges.

The members of the committee worked extremely hard this past year, and for their efforts I would like to recognize and thank Vice Chair Geetha Ravindra, E. Allen Newcomb, Timothy T. Szabo, Anthony F. Troy, Mark D. Seidelson, Robert S. Ballou, George Mason, Tom Gallagher, Stephen E. Scarce, and Deborah M. Costello. The committee also taxed the skills and time of VSB staff, who responded in every way. Special recognition and thanks go to Barbara O. Allen, Paulette J. Davidson, and Dolly C. Shaffner.

The committee will continue its responsibilities of oversight for the FDRP, and at the same time look for ways to expand the program, strengthen it, and encourage its use among lawyers and clients.

In the next year, the committee will be under the very capable leadership of Geetha Ravindra as chair, and Deborah M. Costello as vice chair.

