



Virginia State Bar

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Dear Virginia lawyers:

As the Supreme Court and my predecessor, Marni Byrum, shared with you earlier this summer, 2020 has presented a myriad of challenges for the legal community. From a once-in-a-lifetime public health crisis to civil unrest regarding policing, public art and historical iconography, the nation and the Commonwealth have been tested in extraordinary ways this year. How we, as citizens and a profession, rise to these challenges is a topic worthy of varied solutions.

Of course, as an agency of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the VSB is prohibited from taking a stance on specific political or ideological issues outside the regulation of the legal profession or improvement of the quality of legal services. That said, we are not entirely passive observers and I encourage your thoughtful consideration about ways to address our problems.

For instance, with regard to COVID-19, we know that many of our neighbors are struggling. Evictions, employment issues and domestic violence are areas of law surging with need. I recognize that lawyers are not immune from the hardships of the pandemic, but I would invite those who are able to redouble your commitment to Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 and the goal for lawyers to render two percent of their time to pro bono legal services. This can be accomplished in many ways, to include: registering on [JusticeServer](#) to take pro bono cases from legal services providers; completing the [COVID-19 Pro Bono Interest Form](#), to connect volunteers with opportunities that match their service goals; signing up for [Virginia Free Legal Answers](#), an online portal providing access to advice and information about non-criminal legal matters; and joining the [Virginia Lawyer Referral Service](#), to provide 30-minute consultations to potential clients at a moderate cost.

As it concerns our societal difficulties, I commend to your attention a recent proposal by the Fairfax Circuit Court expressed in its “Initial plan of action to address systemic racism and enhance civic engagement with our community.” In addition, I urge you to consider participating in a discussion the VSB will be hosting at 4:00 p.m. on September 24 on the topic of implicit bias. Rather than suggesting *what* to think, this event entitled “Time to Talk: Explicitly Addressing Implicit Bias,” will make us pause and reflect on *how* we think. I suspect this introspection will help us with the ongoing public dialogue.

This is not the time for lawyers to be shy and hide from societal challenges. Rather it is a time for us to bring our courage, our brains, and our hearts to the fore and advance solutions to crises that we are all in together.

Brian L. Buniva, President