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# SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA



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March 21, 2011

Ms. Karen A. Gould, Executive Director  
Virginia State Bar  
Suite 1500  
707 East Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23219-2800

Re: Judicial Boundary Realignment Study

Dear Ms. Gould:

The Supreme Court of Virginia has been asked by the General Assembly to review and recommend changes to the existing boundary lines for Virginia's judicial circuits and districts, including the number of judges designated to serve in each proposed judicial circuit and district. This review of the regional organization of the local courts into various circuits and districts has significance primarily for administrative purposes and for determining in which local courts particular judges will have the authority to preside. The Court's recommendations are due to the General Assembly by November 1, 2011.

I am writing to seek input from the organization or agency you represent, which interacts with the court system and may be affected by changes to the circuit and district boundaries.

Currently, circuit and district judges are appointed to serve a particular circuit or district. Their workloads are, in large part, a function of the number of cases within their circuit or district, but other factors are involved. Some circuits and districts are comprised of a single locality. In larger, multi-jurisdiction circuits and districts, judges may be required to travel on a regular basis among the jurisdictions where they preside. For example, the current 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit is comprised of nine localities. The five judges who preside in the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit travel to different courthouses to hear cases filed in these various localities. To assist you in visualizing this, I am including with this letter a map of the current judicial circuits and districts.

*[Faint, illegible text at the bottom of the page]*

Letter to Ms. Gould

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This request for you to facilitate comments is one of the initial steps in an involved study process. A study committee, comprised of judges, clerks, attorneys, and a chief magistrate, has been selected to make recommendations for realigning the boundaries of the judicial circuits and districts. Based on a review of the comments submitted in response to this letter and other data compiled by the Office of the Executive Secretary, I expect that alternative plans for the boundaries of the judicial circuits and districts will be developed. A series of town hall-type meetings will be held across the Commonwealth this summer in order to present details and solicit public comment with respect to the specific plans proposed. I anticipate that approximately six such meetings will be held in the following areas of the Commonwealth: Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, Hampton Roads, the Shenandoah Valley, Southside Virginia, and far Southwest Virginia.

The study committee will then review the feedback received regarding the alternative proposals realigning the circuit and district boundaries and make their recommendations regarding a proposal to the Court for consideration. The Court will submit its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by November 1, 2011. The final decision concerning reconfiguration of the judicial circuits and districts will be made by the General Assembly.

On behalf of the Court, I encourage you to take the opportunity to provide us with suggestions for facts, issues or circumstances that your organization or agency believes should be considered as we study the realignment of judicial boundaries. Please direct your comments as follows:

*Via mail to:*

Karl R. Hade  
Executive Secretary  
Supreme Court of Virginia  
100 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

*Or via email to:*

[JBRS@courts.state.va.us](mailto:JBRS@courts.state.va.us)

**To ensure consideration, please provide your input no later than April 18, 2011.**

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and response.

Very truly yours,



Cynthia D. Kinser

Enclosure

# MAP OF VIRGINIA'S JUDICIAL CIRCUITS AND DISTRICTS

