

Emeritus Member Changes Attract Quality Lawyer

by Deirdre Norman



Charlie Phillips of Salem says of his pending retirement: “I don’t want to go to Florida!” Rather, he has decided to avail himself of the emeritus member rule change that allows retired lawyers to work on pro bono cases without supervision, as was previously required.

“I was enticed to ask to be an emeritus member of the VSB upon my retirement June 30, 2018, says Phillips, “because I won’t have to be supervised and I will be covered by the malpractice insurance of the charitable agency for whom I plan to work.

“I have prosecuted and defended murder cases and other serious criminal charges, and I have handled high end divorce cases during my 55-year career. I want to give back to my profession that has given so much to me.”

An AV-rated preeminent lawyer who specializes in divorce and criminal law, Phillips says, “Once you retire, you need a plan to keep your mind busy and to have social contact.”

I have prosecuted and defended murder cases and other serious criminal charges, and I have handled high end divorce cases during my 55-year career. I want to give back to my profession that has given so much to me.

Although Phillips is active in his church, his local YMCA, and serves on the board of a local nursing home, he now plans to spend at least three days a week helping low-income Virginians in his community with their legal problems.

Says Phillips, “I am blessed to enjoy the love of the law and to be able to apply it. I enjoy helping people. Helping people supplies me with satisfaction, and I am going to explore working for Blue Ridge Legal Services since they have offices in Roanoke.”

In a pilot program to coincide with the emeritus rule changes, Virginia CLE has agreed to provide emeritus members with 12 free hours of CLE per year. Emeritus members already do not pay annual dues to the Virginia State Bar, but they must certify annually their affiliation with a qualified legal services provider. Many of the legal services providers are required to carry malpractice insurance of \$250,000 per claim for lawyers working in their program. Still, all lawyers with an extended reporting endorsement or tail coverage who are interested in emeritus status should contact their professional liability carrier prior to providing pro bono service.

Now that emeritus members no longer require supervision and can attain 12 free hours of CLE per year, retiring lawyers who have practiced for 20 or more years (including five out of the seven preceding the emeritus application) have found an easier path to helping the thousands of low-income Virginians in need of lawyers who will benefit from the decades of experience that senior attorneys bring to the profession.

For more information on doing pro bono work as an emeritus lawyer, please contact Crista Ganz at cgantz@vsb.org.