

# SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA

CHIEF JUSTICE  
DONALD W. LEMONS

JUSTICES  
S. BERNARD GOODWYN  
WILLIAM C. MIMS  
ELIZABETH A. McCLANAHAN  
CLEO E. POWELL  
D. ARTHUR KELSEY  
STEPHEN R. McCULLOUGH

SENIOR JUSTICES  
CHARLES S. RUSSELL  
ELIZABETH B. LACY  
LAWRENCE L. KOONTZ, JR.  
LEROY F. MILLETTE, JR.



CLERK  
PATRICIA L. HARRINGTON  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
KARL R. HADE  
CHIEF STAFF ATTORNEY  
K. LORRAINE LORD  
REPORTER OF DECISIONS  
KENT SINCLAIR  
STATE LAW LIBRARIAN  
GAIL WARREN

100 NORTH NINTH STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2334  
(804) 786-6455  
WWW.COURTS.STATE.VA.US

April 15, 2018

Dear Members of the Virginia State Bar:

I am writing to encourage you to voluntarily report your pro bono legal service when you file your Virginia State Bar license renewal application in 2019.

As you know, Rule 6.1 of the Rules of Professional Conduct establishes an aspirational goal for the provision of pro bono legal services: "A lawyer should render at least two percent per year of the lawyer's professional time to pro bono public legal services." Many Virginians are unable to hire a lawyer when they have legal issues. In court proceedings, self-represented parties are less likely to be successful, regardless of the merits of their complaint or defense. Low-income individuals and families are greatly in need of assistance from lawyers.

In his "President's Message" that appeared in the October 2016 *Virginia Lawyer*, entitled "The Most Meaningful Service We Provide," Virginia State Bar President Michael W. Robinson observed:

Simply put, our privilege to practice law carries with it the responsibility to ensure legal services are available to those who, because of financial circumstances, cannot otherwise afford representation. This principle upholds the highest ideals of our profession, and is likewise firmly ensconced in our Rules of Professional Conduct. Rule 6.1 sets forth an aspirational goal for Virginia lawyers to devote 2 percent of their professional time to pro bono public service. That equals just 40-50 hours per year. The goal is aspirational – a distinction that goes hand-in-hand with the voluntary nature of pro bono work, and recognizes that we are perhaps at our best when undertaking voluntary efforts.

On February 27, 2018, the Supreme Court of Virginia amended Part Six, § IV of the Rules of Court by adding Paragraph 22. When Virginia lawyers file their annual Virginia State Bar license renewal application, they will be asked to voluntarily report the number of hours they devoted to pro bono service, or the amount of their direct financial support of programs that

Letter to Members of the Virginia State Bar  
April 15, 2018  
Page Two

provide direct delivery of pro bono legal services. In accordance with Paragraph 22, the annual license renewal application will allow lawyers to identify the number of pro bono hours provided in the period from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019, identify the financial contribution made in lieu of direct service, indicate that the two percent aspirational goal is inapplicable, or decline to make any report. The amendment does not go into effect until December 1, 2018. I write to bring it to your attention so that, if you choose to voluntarily report, you can begin to track hours or financial contributions now for easier reporting in 2019.

As Mr. Robinson said in the conclusion to his President's Message:

Pro bono work allows us to use our special skills as lawyers to improve and change people's lives in ways small and large. From personal experience, and from many discussions with lawyers around the Commonwealth, I can join the chorus that also says it is often the most meaningful – and personally satisfying – service we provide.

The Supreme Court of Virginia is solidly behind the provision of pro bono services. I encourage you to consider Mr. Robinson's inspirational words and to voluntarily report your efforts.

Sincerely,



Donald W. Lemons

DWL:sa