
The Outlook for 2018–2019

by Luis A. Perez, Diversity Conference Chair

As someone born on a small island in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico) and raised in a predominantly Hispanic culture, I am honored to have the privilege to serve as chair of the Virginia State Bar Diversity Conference for fiscal year 2018–2019. Since its inception in 2010, the Diversity Conference has gone a long way toward accomplishing its mission of promoting, encouraging, and facilitating diversity and inclusion in the practice of law and the judiciary — thanks to the strong leadership and determination of great leaders that now I have the challenge to follow.

We still have a long way to go and many challenges and roadblocks to overcome in order to expand our mission. One of our main priorities for the upcoming year will be to increase our membership and increase awareness of the Diversity Conference initiatives and programs. To this end, I would like to remind all Virginia State Bar members that Diversity Conference membership is **free** and all you need to do to join is to fill out the membership application found on our website at www.vsb.org/site/conferences/diversity. As a member, you will be informed of all our committee work and activities and have access to our newsletter, *Invictus*, which provides information and updates on all our projects and events.

Another major goal for this year will be to increase the volunteer involvement and active participation of all our members in the planning, organization, and implementation of our programs and initiatives. You do not need to be a lawyer or a member of the board of governors in order to volunteer and help us advance our goals and mission. Anyone can join and be a member of any of our committees who are responsible for planning, organizing and putting together our programs and initiatives.

Some of our committees include:

The Annual Meeting/CLE Committee, this committee puts together the annual meeting showcase CLE programming and the Fore Diversity Golf Tournament. We are already looking for new input and ideas for the showcase CLE for next year's annual meeting and for a social networking gathering in order to promote our conference and increase our membership;

The Pipeline & Community Projects Committee, this committee helps promote, among others, the Hill/Tucker Pre-Law Institute and the Rule of Law Student Day at the Capitol. These initiatives target minority and economically disadvantaged high school students who have demonstrated an interest in pursuing a legal career and provide them with a unique educational experience about the legal profession. This year the institute occurred July 8–13, 2018;

The Law Students Committee, this committee works in coordination with Virginia law schools to put together our

Mentor/Mentee Initiative. Through this initiative, the Diversity Conference sponsors two law students from each law school to attend the VSB Annual Meeting and participate in all the events along with a Diversity Conference mentor;

The Membership Committee, this committee organizes different events and activities in order to promote the Diversity Conference work, increase our membership, and provide networking opportunities among our members. We need the support of our members and welcome everyone's ideas and willingness to help in order to promote our goals and expand our mission. If you are interested in joining any of our committees or volunteering for any of our events and becoming part of our team, please feel free to contact me at abogadolp@gmail.com or visit our website at www.vsb.org/site/conferences/diversity.

Finally, a major goal for this year will be starting a statewide dialogue about the value of diversity and inclusion, and how it benefits the practice of law, the administration of justice, and the community. This year we are starting a yearly forum on diversity and the law. The first annual Forum on Diversity in the Legal Profession will take place November 9, 2018, at the University of Richmond School of Law. We are putting together an exciting and entertaining program where we will highlight issues such as understanding diversity and how it is impacting the practice of law within the Commonwealth of Virginia, what is implicit bias and how it affects the decision-making process, best business practices, and how diversity and inclusion can be a business asset. The program is free for all our members. It will be followed with a networking reception and we are seeking approval for four to five hours of CLE credits. Please mark your calendars as we hope to see you there. For more information, please visit our website at www.vsb.org/site/conferences/diversity and do not forget to fill out the membership application if you are not still a member.



Luis A. Perez's litigation practice is focused in domestic relations, juvenile, criminal and traffic law. In addition to his work with the Diversity Conference, he is also the president-elect of the Fairfax Bar Association, a member of the Board of Governors of the VSB Conference of Local and Specialty Bar Associations, and on the Board of Directors for Legal Services Corporation of Virginia. He is a past-president of the Hispanic Bar Association of Virginia and the Fairfax Law Foundation. His awards include the James Keith Public Service Award, the Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico Pro Bono Award, and the Leader in the Law Award by *Virginia Lawyers Weekly*.