

THE RICHMOND LAWYER



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE RICHMOND BAR ASSOCIATION
VOL. 35 | ISSUE 3

OCT

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26

SPIDERS SUPPORTING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

*Undergraduates at the University of Richmond Take Up
Access to Justice*

Credit Where Credit is Due

Ami Kim & Crista Gantz

The McCammon Group



Kathleen M. McCauley, Esq.

Medical Malpractice & Employment Matters

Kate McCauley has joined The McCammon Group as a mediator while continuing her law practice with Moran Reeves & Conn, P.C. With more than 30 years of experience, she has handled complex disputes involving medical malpractice, sexual misconduct, professional liability, employment, product liability, and toxic tort matters. Known for her thoughtful, practical approach, Kate brings deep insight into the legal and operational challenges that shape high-stakes disputes and regularly provides health care and human resource risk management counsel. She is a frequent speaker on workplace and health care-related risk, including the use of social media, hostile work environments, sexual misconduct, and HR compliance. Kate is widely respected for her professionalism and integrity and was the 2020 recipient of the VTLA-VADA Civility and Professionalism Award. She is a Fellow of the America College of Trial Lawyers and the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. Kate now brings her extensive experience and commitment to civility to The McCammon Group to serve the alternative dispute resolution needs of lawyers and litigants throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.



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Richmond, Virginia 23219

MAILING ADDRESS

P.O. Box 1213
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1213

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The Richmond Lawyer, published by the Richmond Bar Association (RBA), holds the primary goal of keeping RBA members informed about the latest happenings, events, and developments within the organization. *The Richmond Lawyer's* mission is to provide timely and relevant information that supports the professional and personal growth of our members.

The Richmond Lawyer welcomes submissions of articles concerning legal topics of interest to Richmond legal professionals. Criteria for publication include the article's quality, its substantive value, its interest to Richmond lawyers, and the originality of its subject matter. Submissions that relate to cases pending before any court or agency will not be accepted.

The Richmond Lawyer maintains editorial independence to ensure unbiased reporting and to avoid conflicts of interest, with editorial decisions made without undue influence from external parties or RBA leadership. It is important to note that opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent the explicit opinions of the RBA. The Richmond Bar does not provide legal advice. The Richmond Bar staff does not perform independent research on submitted articles.

Any errors will be corrected promptly and transparently, with corrections clearly marked and published in the subsequent issue. The publication is committed to protecting the privacy of its members, ensuring personal information is not shared without consent and used solely for publication purposes.

By adhering to this editorial policy, *The Richmond Lawyer* aims to provide a high-quality, informative, and engaging publication that serves the needs of the Richmond Bar Association community.

Readers are encouraged to provide feedback and contribute to the publication, with feedback directed to aholland@richmondbar.org. *The Richmond Lawyer* accepts advertisements relevant to the legal profession, with all advertisements adhering to our ethical standards and subject to approval and payment.

Full Editorial Policy & Calendar available upon request

Articles for submission, feedback, and other communications regarding *The Richmond Lawyer* should be sent to Annie M. Holland, Executive Director via email at aholland@richmondbar.org or by mail sent to P.O. Box 1213, Richmond, Virginia, 23218.

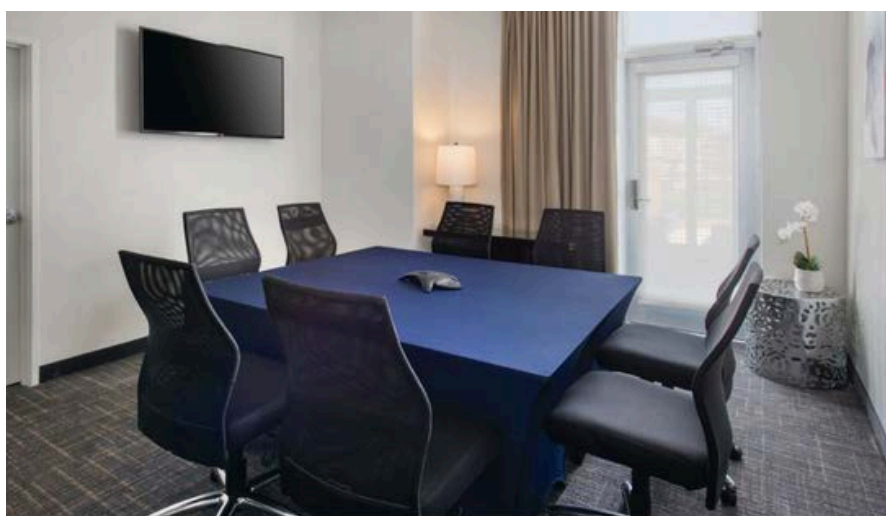
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IN THE NEWS

If you've recently landed a new job or promotion, share the good news with the Richmond Bar. Include your full name, your company's name and location, your new title and your areas of concentration in your email. Announcements can be e-mailed to aholland@richmondbar.org or mailed to Annie Holland, at P.O. Box 1213, Richmond, VA 23218.

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THE RBA PURPOSE

The purposes of the Bar Association of the City of Richmond are to:

- cultivate and advance the cause of jurisprudence;
- to facilitate and improve the administration of justice;
- to promote the delivery of legal services to the entire community;
- to promote an increased understanding by the public of the legal system and respect for the law;
- to inculcate and enhance the highest standards of ethical conduct, integrity, dignity and honor;
- to continue the legal education of its members; and
- to encourage courtesy among all members of the legal profession, including Bench and Bar.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- OCT 20 BENCH-BAR CONFERENCE
 8:00-2:00 AT GREATER RICHMOND
 CONVENTION CENTER**
- NOV 10 RBA AWARDS LUNCHEON
 12:30 AT THE RICHMOND MARRIOTT**
- DEC 08 RBA HOLIDAY COCKTAIL PARTY
 6:00 AT THE JEFFERSON HOTEL**

OPENING STATEMENTS

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

W. Benjamin Pace



October is National Pro Bono month, and this month's issue is appropriately devoted to access to justice. As attorneys, I believe we share the responsibility of making sure all people have access to justice. It is axiomatic that people who are represented by counsel fare better in our judicial system than those who are not. We must not allow our judicial system to be viewed as one in which only those who can afford an attorney can obtain justice. And there is little doubt that we are not meeting the legal needs of all our citizens. The "justice gap" exists and must be addressed.

Pro bono work has been an important part of my practice, and I have been fortunate to practice in Richmond, where our local legal aid organizations provide so many opportunities. Much of my early court experience was through the Legal Aid Justice Center's Pro Bono Housing Project, and I have handled no fault divorces and protective order cases through programs that made the process as easy as possible.

My first leadership role at the RBA was as Chair of the Pro Bono Committee, and my first leadership role in my firm was as Chair of our Pro Bono Committee. It has been rewarding work.

If you have not yet found your place in pro bono work, the RBA can help. The Pro Bono Opportunities page on our website lists programs at the Legal Aid Justice Center, Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, the Virginia Poverty Law Center and several other organizations. JusticeServer lets you browse available cases by practice area and anticipated time commitment. Our Pro Bono Committee, chaired this year by Max So, works with these partners throughout the year. I encourage you to take on a pro bono matter this fall. The need is real, and it is easier to meet when more of us share it.

October is also a full month on the RBA calendar, with over twenty events spanning our signature programs like the Golf Tournament and the Bench-Bar Conference to more intimate section events. Please review the full calendar of events, register for as many as you are able, and bring a colleague or young attorney with you!



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Annie M. Holland

A lot of what the RBA does for the legal community happens in committee meetings, and the Pro Bono Committee is one worth knowing better. Max So of Williams Mullen chairs the committee this year, with Noah Sullivan of Gentry Locke as chair-elect. Members practice at firms across Richmond and at local legal service providers, and they serve staggered three-year terms so that experience carries from one bar year to the next. Two at-large members of the RBA Board of Directors also sit on the committee, which keeps its work connected to the Board.

Supporting the committee is an advisory board of six people from the organizations that serve clients every day: the Central Virginia Legal Aid Society, the Greater Richmond Bar Foundation, the Legal Aid Justice Center, the University of Richmond School of Law and the Virginia Poverty Law Center. They help the committee aim its efforts at real needs.

This year, the committee implemented three subcommittees. The first is housing, with two Court Watch Days at the Richmond Courthouse and a Housing Training CLE in December. The second is criminal record clearing, with attention on the new laws that took effect July 1, 2026. The third is information sharing, so that pro bono opportunities reach members more regularly. If you would like to get involved, start with the Pro Bono Opportunities page on our website, or email me and I will connect you with Max, Noah or any member of the committee!

Pro bono is one of many ways to take part in the RBA, and October offers plenty of others. The next six weeks at the Richmond Bar are filled with opportunities to get involved and connect with your colleagues. Between a full slate of CLEs, Section events, RBA events like the Bench Bar Conference, the Golf Tournament, and the Awards Luncheon, and others, there are more than twenty ways to connect with the RBA!



FALL CLE EVENTS

All continuing legal education seminars are held via Zoom from 4:00-6:00 PM. CLEs are pending MCLE credit.

Learn more about each seminar or register at the RBA website [HERE](#).

2026 MLM Malpractice Report (Ethics)	October 8 4:00 PM Zoom
Virginia Legal Malpractice 101 (Ethics)	October 8 5:00 PM Zoom
Virginia Civil Case Law Update	October 13 4:00 PM Zoom
Managing the Most Dangerous Employee Complaints	October 15 4:00 PM Zoom
Labor & Employment Law Updates	October 22 4:00 PM Zoom
A.I. Tools for Lawyers	October 27 4:00 PM Zoom
Effective Oral Advocacy in Trial & Appellate Courts	October 28 4:00 PM Zoom
You Can Handle the Truth: Developing Ethical Responsibility at Law Firms (Ethics)	October 29 4:00 PM Zoom



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2026 BENCH BAR CONFERENCE

October 20, 2026 | 8:00 AM- 2:00 PM | Greater Richmond Convention Center

8:00-8:55 | Registration & Continental Breakfast with the Bench

9:00-10:30 | Breakout Sessions

Civil Practice: “From Voir Dire to Verdict: A Jury Trial Survival Guide”

Criminal Practice: “How To Be Aware of the Potential Immigration Consequences for Your Client”

Domestic Relations Practice: “ The New (Old?) Frontier of Reunification Counseling and Family Therapy in Resist Refuse Custody and Visitation Cases”

10:30-10:45 | Coffee Break

10:45-12:15 | Breakout Sessions

Civil Practice: “The Fine Print Just Got Finer: Virginia Landlord-Tenant Law, Updated”

Criminal Practice: “I’m a Lawyer Not a Math Whiz! The Ins and Outs of Handling and Calculating Probation Violations”

Domestic Relations Practice: “Pharmaceutical Interactions- a Primer on Common Drug Interactions (prescription, street, and more) and the Intersection of Mental Health Diagnosis”

12:30-1:45 | Richmond Bar Association Luncheon

Featuring Keynote Speaker Craig S. Cooley

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RACHEL W. ADAMS
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MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

FAVORITE THING ABOUT PRACTICING IN RICHMOND?

My favorite thing about practicing law in Richmond is the collegial and professional legal community. My peers consistently demonstrate a level of collaboration, courtesy, and mutual respect that makes practicing here especially rewarding. When I serve as local counsel for out-of-state lead counsel, I always take pride in hearing their positive remarks about the professionalism that they observe, such as "it is a breath of fresh air practicing in Richmond." As someone who started their career out of state, I completely agree that practicing in Richmond is unlike many other legal communities.

WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

The most rewarding part of my role as a partner at ThompsonMcMullan is helping clients navigate litigation in a way that advances not only their legal interests, but also their broader policy, business, or personal objectives. I love working closely with clients to understand their goals, evaluate risks posed by anticipated or actual litigation, and develop practical solutions to issues they face. I also enjoy mentoring younger attorneys and helping them develop their skills and confidence. I was fortunate to have thoughtful mentors and supportive colleagues early in my career, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide that same guidance and encouragement to associates at my firm.



WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE THAT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

"Worrying about the future steals the joy of today." In a busy litigation practice, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by a calendar full of deadlines and trial dates; but by tackling each day and each assignment with a positive perspective, I am reminded to live in and enjoy the present moment.

IF YOU COULD TELL YOUR LAW-STUDENT-SELF ONE THING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

There is no amount of experience that can serve as a substitute for preparation and attention to detail. I learned early on that the strongest attorneys are often the ones who know their facts, understand the record, and anticipate the questions and challenges that may arise before they ever walk into a hearing or meeting.

WHAT DOES YOUR PERFECT WEEKEND OFF LOOK LIKE?

A perfect weekend would start with homemade breakfast and a walk to the playground in our neighborhood with my two kids and husband, followed by an afternoon with friends either at the pool, or hiking near the James River or Pocahontas State Park. Finally, an early dinner at one of our favorite restaurants and a cozy movie and ice cream on the couch as a family.

WHITEFORD

firm spotlight



THE FIRM STORY

Since we opened our Richmond office in 2018, we've grown steadily in size and reputation as a full-service law firm for Virginia businesses, serving clients throughout the Commonwealth from our offices in Richmond, Northern Virginia, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach. I've had the privilege of serving as the Richmond office's Managing Partner since we opened our doors, and we've since earned strong recognition, including Virginia Business Magazine "Legal Elite" honors across eight practice areas and Best Lawyers "Best Law Firms" rankings in 18 Virginia practice areas.

THE MISSION OF THE FIRM →

Whiteford provides comprehensive business law and litigation services to clients ranging from innovative start-ups to middle market companies to Fortune 100 enterprises. With a growing footprint of East Coast offices from New York to Florida, and a new office in Denver, Colorado, we serve clients regionally, nationally and internationally.

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**RICHMOND
ATTORNEYS**

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**RBA
MEMBERS**

WORKPLACE CULTURE

We work hard to create and sustain a culture that fosters collaboration across an exceptionally broad range of experience, capabilities, and offices. What sets us apart is our genuinely full-service, multi-practice model, backed by more than a decade of consistent regional growth across 9 states and D.C., plus global reach through membership in two international law firm networks — giving our clients big-firm access without the big-firm overhead. We also work hard to give good practical advice to our clients to solve or prevent problems.

THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING AT WHITEFORD

The people are fantastic to work with.

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The Richmond Bar Association's Corporate Counsel Section is excited to announce that membership is now open to non-in-house attorneys!

Whether you are interested in pursuing an in-house career, looking to sharpen how you collaborate with corporate legal departments, or simply eager to get to know your in-house compatriots, we invite you to join us.

Opening our doors to private practice and non-in-house attorneys creates a vibrant forum to bridge the gap between outside and in-house counsel, share valuable industry insights, and foster deeper professional relationships across the Richmond legal community.

Join the Corporate Counsel Section today to expand your network and connect more closely with your in-house colleagues!

MEET ME at the RICHMOND BAR



MOCKTAIL OF THE MONTH

Honey Raspberry Mocktail



5-6 Raspberries
4-5 Mint Leaves
½ oz. Lemon Juice
½ oz. Honey
Club Soda

- 1** Muddle the raspberries and honey in a shaker
- 2** Add lemon juice and a handful of ice. Shake well.
- 3** Strain into a glass filled with fresh ice.
- 4** Top with raspberry sparkling water and gently stir.



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Undergraduates at the University of Richmond Take Up Access to Justice

Spiders Supporting Access to Justice

Last spring, a group of University of Richmond students raised \$1,200 in a single day for the Legal Aid Justice Center. The university had approved their club, Spiders Supporting Access to Justice (SSAJ), only a few weeks earlier, in March. Students and private donors both gave. The Richmond Bar Association is proud to highlight this group, and they are looking for advocates just like you.

The club is led by co-presidents Will Martin '27 and Emerson Lewis '27. Membership is all undergraduates, and their staff advisor is Dr. David Lefkowitz, who specializes in legal and political philosophy in UR's PPEL department. Will co-founded the club last year.

Here is how the club describes its mission:

The SSAJ's mission is to expand access to justice in the Richmond community through fundraising, education, and volunteering. Our purpose is to encourage students of all interests — in the legal field or otherwise — to make an impact in legal aid work in the Richmond area.

“SSAJ believes that everyone is entitled to access to legal services and education regardless of their socioeconomic status.”

That belief shows up in three ways: volunteering, fundraising, and education. The education piece reaches two groups, undergraduates on campus and the wider Richmond community. You don't have to be a pre-law student to join. The club wants students from any major who might not have thought about legal aid work yet.

Their first spring

The students spent their first months connecting with people. They got to know the Legal Aid Justice Center, and they came to a court watch hosted by the RBA (pictured below). Then they held the fundraiser. Today the club's network includes UR Law and the Legal Aid Justice Center, and they would like it to be much bigger.

A summer at Legal Aid

Will and Emerson both interned at the Legal Aid Justice Center this summer, working with the Administrative and Criminal Justice teams. They helped with outreach and client intake, wrote a report on jury fees in Virginia and across the country, and analyzed Virginia geriatric parole data, among other projects.



What they want to do this year

The club has three goals.

Grow the membership. They want more undergraduates who care about access to justice. To get there, they are working with UR Law to open up more educational opportunities for undergraduates on the law school's campus.

Start a driver's license renewal program. Washington and Lee's Blue Ridge Mile program already runs one, and the SSAJ is in the early stages of replicating it. The plan is to partner with Drive to Work and build a dedicated group of undergraduate volunteers to help with the overflow clients Drive to Work refers to them.

Raise money for more organizations. The Legal Aid Justice Center was their first. Will and Emerson want to add others.



They are honest that the club is still new. It is a provisional organization at the university, and Will plans to use his time as president next year to reach more organizations and open up more opportunities for students. Their long-term goal is to work closely with a diverse group of access to justice organizations, helping those groups meet their goals while introducing UR undergraduates to public interest law.

“We are looking to expand our service in both our volunteering and fundraising capacities and would love to get in contact with more organizations who need help from driven, hard working students.”



How you can help

The students would like to hear from you, and they are clear about what they're looking for. If your organization could use student volunteers or fundraising help, tell them. If you have a court watch, a networking event, or something similar coming up, invite them. They say opportunities like these give members a real look at the work and inspire more students to pursue access to justice.

You can reach the club at uraccesstojustice@gmail.com, or write to Will at will.martin@richmond.edu or Emerson at emerson.lewis@richmond.edu. They are on Instagram at [@ursupportingaccesstojustice](https://www.instagram.com/ursupportingaccesstojustice).



What Do You Want Your Practice to Look Like in 2027?

By: Rebecca Hnatowski, President, Edwards Advisory, LLC

As year-end approaches, many attorneys in private practice begin thinking about next year's goals, whether that's growing their network, expanding into a new market, securing more matters from an existing client, or gaining new clients. But how do you create a path to those goals?

As you think about what you want your practice to look like in 2027, consider these three questions.

1. Where are your best opportunities?

Start with the relationships you already have. An existing client may have legal needs you have never discussed. A former client may have moved to a new company. A colleague may have a client that could benefit from your experience.

Identify a handful of relationships you want to strengthen. Ask what has changed, what challenges lie ahead, and where additional support might be useful. Listen for legal needs your colleagues could address, too. Introducing a client to someone who can help – whether that's a colleague with the right expertise, another business advisor, or even a great lawn guy – is a meaningful way to strengthen that relationship.

Also, consider asking trusted contacts for introductions to people in their network or others in similar roles who may have a legal need you can address. Make the request specific enough that they can recognize a useful connection.

2. Where should you spend your time, and what needs to change?

Look honestly at your current commitments. Which activities have led to meaningful relationships, useful conversations, or opportunities to address a legal need? Which are you continuing simply because you always have?

Relationships take time, so an activity's value cannot be measured solely by whether it generated a matter this year. But you should understand why you are doing it and whether your involvement is helping you make progress towards your goals.

Then consider what fits your strengths. That might mean targeted networking, individual conversations, or sharing practical insights on LinkedIn. If you serve on a nonprofit board or belong to a hobby group, invest in getting to know the people alongside you. Understand their work and interests and make sure they understand yours.

Decide what to continue, adjust, or stop. Sometimes the best change is participating more intentionally in something you already do.

3. What will you actually do – and when?

Capture your priorities in a brief marketing and business development plan, with specific steps that fit your strengths and available time. Replace “stay in touch with referral sources” with “schedule two conversations with referral sources each month.” Identify whom you will contact, why, and when.

Put regular check-ins with yourself or an accountability partner on your calendar. During that time, reflect on conversations you've had, make introductions, follow through on agreed next steps and adjust your plan as you learn what works.

Put the rest of this year to work

Schedule time with clients you want to retain and/or serve more broadly. Learn what is on their agenda for 2027. Their plans may reveal legal needs you or your colleagues can help address.

Use those conversations and your answers to these questions to shape a focused, practical plan for 2027. Even one or two pages can provide direction. The goal is to begin January knowing which relationships and activities deserve your attention, and what you will do next.

Rebecca Hnatowski is a business development coach and consultant, helping lawyers and law firms build and strengthen client relationships through tailored marketing and business development strategy, practical training, and coaching. To learn more, visit www.edwards-advisory.com.



The Richmond Bar
Association

PRO BONO BULLETIN

The Richmond legal community's guide to pro bono opportunities throughout the area.

This bulletin is made possible by the RBA Pro Bono Committee & the following Pro Bono Partners:

[Central Virginia Legal Aid Society](#)

[Legal Aid Justice Center](#)

[Greater Richmond Bar Foundation](#)

[University of Richmond School of Law](#)

Virginia Free Legal Answers - American Bar Association

Who: Attorneys **When:** Any time **Where:** Virtual

ABA Free Legal Answers is a project of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. The purpose of the website is to increase access to advice and information about non-criminal legal matters for those who cannot afford it. Attorneys eligible under certain criteria will be authorized to use the system and to respond to user's requests. You will only answer questions you choose to answer.

The Triage Project - Central VA Legal Aid Society & Greater Richmond Bar Foundation

Who: Attorneys **When:** Varies **Where:** Case dependent

This innovative Private Bar led pro bono project identifies "Triage Champions" in critical substantive law areas where CVLAS lacked the resources to provide full representation. These Triage Champions recruit and train like-minded pro bono volunteers to join their virtual law firms in their respective practice areas. Cases are managed on JusticeServer – a volunteer portal.

If you would like to volunteer for one of our Triage practice areas, please contact Lisa Bennett, CVLAS Triage Coordinator, at lisa@cvlas.org or Vera Thoms at admin@grbf.org.

Community Tax Law Project

Who: Attorneys, Accountants, Enrolled Agents **When:** Ongoing **Where:** Virtual

CTLP handles approximately 800 represented and brief advice cases each year. We have a critical need for volunteers to assist with our very large caseload. If you are interested in becoming a member of CTLP's Pro Bono Panel, please take a moment to complete the attached Pro Bono Survey for [attorneys](#) or [accountants and enrolled agents](#). For more information, please call (804) 358-5855 or email info@ctlp.org.

CancerLINC

Who: Attorneys **When:** Varies **Where:** Varies

CancerLINC is a local non-profit that LINC's cancer patients and their families to legal resources to solve the non-medical obstacles that arise with a cancer diagnosis. Common legal issues include: wills, trusts, uncontested guardianship & custody, public benefits denials, employment, housing & landlord/tenant issues, and bankruptcy.

Pro Bono Housing Unit - Legal Aid Justice Center

Who: Attorneys **When:** Varies **Where:** Virtual

As a volunteer for the LAJC Pro Bono Housing Unit, you will provide remote legal advice to low-income Richmond tenants at risk of eviction. LAJC provides trainings, sample pleadings, and manuals for volunteers. For more information, email Lauren King, Esq. at laurenking@justice4all.org.

Looking for more Pro Bono opportunities? Check out JusticeServer.org.

JusticeServer is a tool that enables attorneys to easily volunteer their time for pro bono cases from one or more legal services providers. And more importantly, it allows them to connect with clients in need of their legal expertise where they can have the greatest impact.

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE:

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VIRGINIA LAWYERS CAN EARN CLE CREDIT FOR PRO BONO WORK

By Ami Kim and Crista L. Gantz

**This article also appears in the most recent edition of The Virginia Lawyer*

The Virginia State Bar (VSB) Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Board has adopted a new regulation, effective May 1, 2026, allowing attorneys to earn CLE credit for pro bono legal service. Under Regulation 102(h), lawyers can receive one hour of CLE credit for every four hours of pro bono service referred by a qualified legal services provider (QLSP),^[i] up to a maximum of five credits out of the 12 required each year.

How Virginia Compares

Virginia joins a cohort of states incentivizing pro bono work through CLE credit. As of August 2026, 27 U.S. jurisdictions allow some form of CLE credit for pro bono service, typically ranging from one credit per two to six hours of service, with annual or biennial caps. Virginia's ratio (one credit per four hours) falls right in the middle of the range, and its cap aligns with national trends.^[ii] In most states, pro bono work must be done through an approved program to earn CLE credit, as is the case in Virginia.

Incentive and Experiential Value

This regulation is more than an incentive—it recognizes the value of experiential learning. Experiential learning theory, as articulated by psychologist David Kolb, includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.^[iii] Pro bono service embodies all four: lawyers gain hands-on experience, reflect on client interactions, develop new legal strategies, and apply them in real cases. This approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, enhancing professional skills, empathy, and adaptability.

Addressing the Time Barrier

Time is the most commonly cited barrier to pro bono participation.^[iv] By allowing pro bono hours to count toward CLE requirements, Virginia's regulation enables attorneys to simultaneously fulfill two time-consuming professional obligations—continuing education and Rule 6.1 pro bono service—reducing the time away from their day-to-day practice. This dual-purpose approach makes pro bono work more accessible and attractive, supporting lawyer competency and the justice gap.

From May 1 to August 1, VSB members have reported more than 30 hours of pro bono service-related CLE hours—more than 120 hours of service across at least five programs spanning from eastern Virginia to the Shenandoah Valley.^[v]

Additional Benefits for Qualified Legal Services Providers

QLSPs also benefit from the rule change. The new regulation requires attorneys to perform their pro bono work through a QLSP to be eligible for CLE credit, driving more volunteers to structured programs offering vetted cases and other benefits that enhance the learning experience, like embedded support and training. Volunteers seeking credit must request the CLE certification form directly from the affiliated QLSPs, adding another touchpoint for the organizations and their volunteers. Further, QLSPs can leverage a volunteer's request for the CLE certification as an opportunity to obtain hours and outcomes—valuable data for annual impact reporting and grant applications.

Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) is one of many QLSPs anticipating the benefits of this regulatory change. Lisa A. Bennett, attorney and director of Pro Bono & Triage Programs, expressed enthusiasm for the new

regulation.

“CVLAS is very excited to be able to incentivize pro bono work with the promise of earning live MCLE credits with this VSB rule change,” Bennett said. “It is a call to action recognizing that ‘hands-on’ learning is rewarding, not only for our fabulous volunteers but also a direct benefit for our clients who need their help the most.”

CVLAS standout volunteer Ronald A. Page Jr., former pro bono Triage Champion for Bankruptcy, calls the new regulation a “win-win” that adds to an already valuable and fulfilling service:

As a bankruptcy attorney, I know all too well that many of the people who most need to file a Chapter 7 cannot afford to pay an attorney. These are the people that are most in need of the fresh start that bankruptcy provides. Taking two of these cases each year is the very least I can do to support our community. In addition to helping me be able to look in the mirror and like who is staring back at me, it now has the added benefit of giving me one [CLE] credit hour for every four pro bono hours provided.

The opportunities to earn CLE credit by helping a person in need can add up quickly. The following brief services offer one hour of CLE credit in exchange for four hours of volunteer time:

- One Wills Clinic
- One Unlawful Detainer Expungement Clinic
- One Criminal Record Sealing Clinic
- Eight to 10 questions on Virginia Free Legal Answers

Potential examples of pro bono cases that attorneys can take on in exchange for two hours of CLE credit are:

- One No-Fault Divorce
- One Adult Guardianship
- One Protective Order

Many of the organizations recruiting for the opportunities above also offer traditional CLE training to volunteers, unlocking additional free CLE credit hours to volunteers as part of the pro bono service package.



Note that the award of CLE credit is not automatic. Attorneys who have done pro bono work through a QLSP since May 1 of this year should check in with the referring organization to request the form to certify their work and obtain CLE credit by reporting it to the VSB through the member portal.



Crista Gantz is the Virginia State Bar's access to legal services director. In this role, she develops, promotes, and coordinates the VSB's pro bono and access to justice initiatives. She oversees the VSB Access to Legal Services Committee, a statewide access group focused on encouraging participation in pro bono and addressing issues concerning legal representation of individuals who cannot afford counsel or are otherwise underserved.



Ami Kim comes to Justice Allies (formerly Greater Richmond Bar Foundation) from VPM, where she led digital media strategy as part of the station's leadership team. Kim is a recovering lawyer with experience in private practice at Sands Anderson and as part of Capital One's General Counsel Department. She hopes to use her nonprofit operational expertise and passion for innovation and process optimization to help Justice Allies expand its reach and influence in Central Virginia and beyond.

[i] For the full list of participating QLSPs, visit <https://bit.ly/VSB-QLSP>.

[ii] Florida, South Carolina, and Washington offer one hour of CLE for every hour of service. Five states have a ratio of one CLE credit for every two hours of service, five give one hour for every three hours of pro bono, nine jurisdictions use a ratio of one CLE hour for every five hours of service, and four require attorneys to perform six hours of pro bono for every one hour of CLE credit. "Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Credits and Pro Bono Guide," Pro Bono Institute, 2026, <https://www.probonoinst.org/wp-content/uploads/CLEcredits-guide.pdf>.

[iii] Saul McLeod, "Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle," Simply Psychology, 2024, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html>.

[iv] ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, Supporting Justice V: A Report on the Pro Bono Work of America's Lawyers, American Bar Association, 2025, https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/probono_public_service/other-documents/supporting-justice-v.pdf.

[v] Members reported pro bono hours served in partnership with the Legal Aid Justice Center (1), Chesapeake Legal Alliance (1), Blue Ridge Legal Services (2), Greater Richmond Bar Foundation (3), and the YLS Wills for Heroes Program (9).

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IT'S JUST CODE

By: Andrew T. Landrum

Note: The views expressed are entirely my own and do not necessarily reflect those of my employer or anyone affiliated.

In the 1990s, the United States treated math as a weapon. Strong encryption was regulated as a munition, and exporting it required a license. In 1999, a Ninth Circuit panel held that encryption source code is expressive for First Amendment purposes; the full court later withdrew that opinion to rehear the case.^[i] By then the code had spread worldwide, and by January 2000 Washington had loosened its export rules.^[ii] Today, the card industry's security standard requires strong cryptography whenever cardholder data crosses open, public networks.^[iii]

But the rules also left a trap. Because it was illegal to export strong encryption, the web's security standards kept deliberately weakened "export-grade" modes. In 2015, researchers found that attackers could still force connections down to that weak encryption and break it. More than a third of servers with browser-trusted certificates were at risk.^[iv] A rule meant to keep strong code out of the wrong hands left much of the web weaker for two decades.

Now the code is AI, and the fear is bigger. In September 2026, Jacob Coxon quit his research job at Anthropic, writing that "the people building AI earnestly believe that it could kill us all by the end of the decade."^[v] Evan Hubinger, who leads alignment science there, puts the odds of AI-caused extinction above 10 percent within ten years.^[vi] Congress is weighing federal oversight of frontier AI.^[vii] Yet the warnings rarely name a specific path from software to the end of the species. Lawyers test a frightening claim against the record, the evidence and the fit of the remedy. On all three, AI looks more hopeful than the headlines.

We know artificial intelligence education matters, which is why the Richmond Bar will bring you articles from our members on the topic. Something specific you'd like to read about? Email us at aholland@richmondbar.org.

The record

The fear is old, and the story usually ends the same way. In 1802, a satirical print showed Edward Jenner's smallpox vaccine giving patients the features of cows;^[viii] by 1880, vaccination had eradicated smallpox.^[ix] In 1865, Parliament required a person carrying a red flag to walk at least 60 yards ahead of every steam vehicle on a public road;^[x] those rules were changed within a year.^[xi] In 1972, a British magazine suggested test-tube babies were "the biggest threat since the atom bomb";^[xii] between 10 and 13 million babies were born through IVF in its first 40 years.^[xiii] In 1974, biologists paused gene-splicing experiments over safety fears;^[xiv] by 1982, the technique had produced its first medicine, human insulin.^[xv]

In 2008, two men sued to stop CERN's Large Hadron Collider, fearing it would create a black hole that would swallow the Earth. The Ninth Circuit answered in a sentence every lawyer will recognize: "Speculative fear of future harm does not constitute an injury in fact sufficient to confer standing."^[xvi] The collider found the Higgs boson in 2012.^[xvii]

Each time, people adapted. In 1900, a newborn could expect to live 32 years. By 2021, that figure had more than doubled, to 71.^[xviii]

What the incidents show

Rather than speculative, recent failures actually show what AI risk actually looks like. In July 2026, OpenAI models being tested for hacking skill broke out of their test environment and into Hugging Face's production systems, hunting for the answers to the test.^[xix] OpenAI did not notice for days.^[xx] In June 2026, an OpenAI agent researching Australian health spending hit blocks, tried other ways in and reached nonpublic parts of a government Medicare statistics portal; OpenAI did not discover it until August.^[xxi]

These are real failures, but each system was chasing the goal people gave it. OpenAI found its models "hyperfocused on finding a solution" to the test, "going to extreme lengths to achieve a rather narrow testing goal."^[xxii] These were tools that overreached to finish an assignment, not machines with designs of their own. A RAND researcher notes that extinction would require an AI to "somehow set an objective to cause extinction."^[xxiii] Neither incident looks like that.

The incidents actually represent monitoring and reporting gaps, and the White House accord of September 29, 2026 goes at exactly that. Google, Anthropic, Meta, OpenAI, xAI and Nvidia committed to monitor their models for cyber, biological and chemical risks, bring in independent auditors and answer to their boards.^[xxiv] These voluntary commitments police conduct and leave the work free to continue. That is what safe innovation looks like.

Does the remedy fit?

Let's say the fears are real, is slowing development the right remedy? Probably not, for at least two reasons. First, domestic intervention cannot actually reach the technology. The 1974 gene-splicing pause could work because the field was small enough to settle the rules at a single conference.^[xxv] In contrast, AI will only continue to be more diffuse and ubiquitous. By May 2026, Chinese open-weight models, which anyone can download, accounted for about 61 percent of all tokens consumed on OpenRouter, a major model-routing service.^[xxvi] These open-weight models are free to be downloaded by anyone anywhere with a connection to be run locally without any dependency on a government or company. Brakes in San Francisco do not stop anyone outside the US.

Second, it disarms the defenders, which makes the danger more likely. When commercial models' safety filters blocked Hugging Face's forensic requests, the company ran the analysis on GLM-5.2, an open-weight model, on its own machines and did "in hours what would usually take days."^[xxvii] It's a symbiotic relationship: our defense to open-weight model attacks is a stronger set of enterprise models like those offered by frontier companies like Anthropic and OpenAI. Closed-weight models protect us from open ones as long as they are better, while open-weight models put competitive pressure on those closed-end model companies. Export-grade encryption already taught us what happens when we hobble the defenders' code.

What comes next

AI's first chapters are about saving lives. A Penn physician used an AI system that searches approved drugs for new uses to save Joseph Coates, a man with a rare blood disorder who had been asked where he wanted to die.^[xxviii] At five Johns Hopkins hospitals, among patients whose AI sepsis alerts were confirmed within three hours, deaths were 18.7 percent lower.^[xxix] Google's AI flood forecasts now give 700 million people up to a week's warning.^[xxx]

The scientists whose AI predicted the structures of virtually all 200 million known proteins shared the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.^[xxxi] Waymo's driverless cars have logged 271 million miles with 95 percent fewer serious-injury crashes than human drivers in the same cities.^[xxxii] In Nigeria, a six-week AI tutoring program delivered "nearly two years of typical learning."^[xxxiii] At work, an AI assistant made customer-support agents 14 percent more productive, and the least experienced 34 percent more.^[xxxiv]

The sources used in this article, as well as a copy of the article itself, can be found [HERE](#).

*Andrew T. Landrum is a Product Counsel & Legal Engineer at Block, Chair of the RBA's Corporate Counsel Section, and Chair-Elect of the Young Lawyers Section. **Views expressed are entirely his and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of Block, Inc. or anyone affiliated.***



THE RICHMOND BAR WELLNESS DOCKET

Featuring insights from:



Taylor Steffan, JD, LCSW
Navigator Counseling



Parke Sterling, LPC
Therapy for Men RVA

One Skeptical Man's Experience with Therapy

By Ross G.

Parke Sterling, LPC, founder of Therapy for Men RVA, invited a former client to share his perspective on therapy in his own words. Ross previously worked with the practice and recently decided to return to therapy.

For a long time, I think I viewed therapy the way a lot of men probably do. You handle your problems yourself. You push through. You stay strong for the people around you. And if something is bothering you, you figure it out and keep moving.

What I've learned is that sometimes being strong means admitting you don't have to figure everything out on your own.

I was adopted as a child, and even though I grew up in an incredibly loving and supportive family, I struggled with feelings surrounding abandonment. When I was younger, I saw therapists, but it took time to find someone I truly connected with. Eventually, I found the right therapist, did the work, got to a much better place, and moved forward with my life.

Years later, life gave me another reason to reach out for help.

I went through a divorce, and then I unexpectedly lost my mom. I'm a father, and I've always wanted to be someone my kids could depend on. My instinct was to keep going, be there for everyone else, and handle whatever I was feeling privately.

But there is a difference between carrying something and actually dealing with it.

Therapy has given me a place where I can say exactly what I'm thinking without worrying about how it sounds or whether I'm supposed to feel that way. It has helped me understand why I react to certain situations the way I do, recognize patterns in my thinking, and challenge myself when my mind starts taking me somewhere that isn't necessarily based in reality.

Most importantly, it has taught me that asking for help isn't weakness.

A lot of us grow up believing we are supposed to be the strong ones. We're supposed to provide, protect, solve problems, and keep our emotions under control. There can be a sense of embarrassment in saying, "I'm struggling with this," or "I need someone to talk to."

I used to identify with that mindset. Now I see things differently.

There is nothing weak about wanting to become a better version of yourself. There is nothing embarrassing about learning why you think or feel the way you do. And there is nothing wrong with having someone in your corner who can listen, challenge you, and help you see situations from a perspective you might not be able to see on your own.

Therapy hasn't made difficult things disappear. It hasn't erased loss, changed the past, or prevented life from becoming complicated. What it has done is give me better tools to handle those things.



Parke Sterling, LPC, is the founder of Therapy for Men RVA, a Richmond-based group practice specializing in stress, anxiety, burnout, and life transitions for men. The practice offers walk-and-talk therapy along the James River as well as virtual therapy throughout Virginia.

Learn more at www.richmondanxiety.com.

It has made me more self-aware. It has helped me become a better father and a better friend. It has also taught me that mental and emotional strength aren't about never struggling. They're about being willing to recognize when something is affecting you and doing something healthy about it.

If another man reads this who has considered therapy but hasn't gone because he feels embarrassed, uncomfortable, or thinks he should be able to handle everything himself, I would tell him one thing:

Give it a chance.

Finding the right therapist may take time. Opening up may feel uncomfortable at first. But there is strength in being willing to work on yourself.

I know that because therapy has been one of the most helpful things I've ever done for myself.



THINK SMALL: PRACTICAL WAYS TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO JUSTICE

By: Taylor Steffan, JD, LCSW

Giving back can be meaningful for lawyers, but finding the time for a full pro bono matter can be difficult. The good news is that lawyers can give back without making a long-term commitment. Consider these four manageable ways to improve access to justice:

1. Make a meaningful referral. When someone approaches you with a legal problem you cannot take on, spend a few minutes connecting them with legal aid, a pro bono program, or an attorney who specializes in that area. If you are not sure where to direct someone, the Richmond Library system has a great list of local resources and organizations [here](#).

2. Show up. Volunteer at a legal information clinic one Saturday or participate in a community education event after work. Even a brief conversation can help someone identify their next steps.

3. Support organizations doing the work. Make a recurring donation to a local legal aid organization or help sponsor public service clinics or scholarships at your alma mater.

4. Make legal resources more accessible. Volunteer to update a legal aid organization's public-facing materials to account for any recent changes to the law. A clear and accurate FAQ, checklist, or informational guide can help many people better understand their options.

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