

THE
RICHMOND
LAWYER



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE RICHMOND BAR ASSOCIATION
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SEPT
20
25

*"Why Reading Fiction Makes
You a Better Lawyer"*
Brooke Gerber

*"Too Busy for Business
Development?"*
Rebecca Edwards Hnatowski

ALSO INSIDE: "THE ATTORNEY'S GUIDE TO A CLERK'S GOOD SIDE"

**THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF
THE CITY OF RICHMOND**

OFFICE ADDRESS

Truist Place
919 East Main St., Suite 1401
Richmond, Virginia 23219

MAILING ADDRESS

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

WWW.RICHMONDBAR.ORG

PHONE: (804) 780-0700

FAX: (804) 648-7118

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE RICHMOND BAR ASSOCIATION

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EDITORIAL POLICY

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.

WHEN THE NATION'S FIRST
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RBA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 1st | RBA Office Closed
- 2nd | Executive Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 2nd | Awards & Honors Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 4th | Board of Directors Meeting | 12:30 PM | Hunton Andrews Kurth
- 4th | CLE: "DEI" and "Gender Equity in Legal Practice" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 8th | Pro Bono Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 9th | Bankruptcy Section CLE & Luncheon | 12:30-2:00 PM | Williams Mullen
- 11th | RBA Member Appreciation Social | 6:00-8:00 PM | River City Roll
- 15th | Administration of Justice Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Hunton Andrews Kurth
- 16th | Deadline for Judiciary Nominations - Chesterfield General District Court
- 17th | Lunch & Learn: Innovative Driven | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 17th | Judiciary Committee Meeting | 4:00 PM | Whiteford
- 17th | Family Law Section Social | 6:00 PM | Crafted
- 18th | Programs Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 18th | CLE: "Understanding Your Clients Immigration Status" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 23rd | CLE: "VA Appellate Law" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 25th | Communications Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 25th | CLE: "VA Civil Case Law Update" | 3:00-5:00 PM | Zoom
- 26th | Membership Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom
- 29th | Executive Committee Meeting | 12:30 PM | Zoom

OCTOBER

- 1st | CLE: "Appeals 101" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 2nd | Board of Directors Meeting | 12:30 PM | Hunton Andrews Kurth
- 2nd | ETHICS CLE: "Difficult Clients" & "How to Not Get Hacked" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 6th | RBA Golf Tournament | 12:00-7:00 PM | Lakeside Park Club
- 8th | CLE: "Rule 3:26 & the Changing Landscape of Injunctive Relief" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 9th | CLE: "Latest in Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation" | 2:00-4:00 PM | Zoom
- 13th | RBA Office Closed
- 14th | CLE: "Ethics & Artificial Intelligence" | 4:00-6:00 PM | Zoom
- 21st | Bench Bar Conference | 8:00 AM-2:00 PM | Greater Richmond Convention Center
- 23rd | Lunch & Learn: College Solutions | 12:30 PM | Zoom



JUSTICE D. ARTHUR KELSEY

TO BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE BENCH BAR CONFERENCE

The Richmond Bar Association is proud to announce that Virginia Supreme Court Justice D. Arthur Kelsey will be the keynote speaker at the 33rd Annual Bench-Bar Conference Luncheon. Justice D. Arthur Kelsey serves on the Supreme Court of Virginia, having earlier served as an appellate judge on the Virginia Court of Appeals and a trial judge in the Fifth Judicial Circuit of Virginia. Prior to joining the bench in 2000, Kelsey was a litigation partner at Hunton & Williams.

The Bench-Bar Luncheon will be held immediately following the Bench-Bar Conference on Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. The luncheon will begin at 12:30 PM. To register for the luncheon, the conference, or both events, please visit the [Richmond Bar website](http://www.richmondbar.org). Registration closes on October 14, 2025.

2025 Bench-Bar Luncheon Sponsor



Special Thanks



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.

Harman Claytor Corrigan & Wellman welcomes **Stephen J. McDonald, N. Winston West, IV, and Brian S. Foreman** to the firm's Richmond Office.

Stephen J. McDonald N. Winston West, IV Brian S. Foreman



Associate



Associate



Senior Of Counsel

Miles & Stockbridge welcomes **Andy Mathews** to the firm's Richmond Office. Mathews assists clients in all phases of the construction process, from pre-bid development and contracting through close-out, as well as litigation, if needed. He brings a practical, business-minded approach that helps clients avoid risk and resolve issues efficiently when they arise.

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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.



"If my teacher keeps piling on the homework I'm going to have to get another dog!"



One of the things that makes the Richmond Bar Association unique is the collaboration within our legal community. Not just among attorneys, but between the bar and the bench. We talk often about professionalism and collegiality as core values of this Association, and nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than in our longstanding partnership with the judiciary.

The RBA is proud to have many members of the judiciary actively engaged in the work of the Association. Each year, we name an Honorary Vice President from the bench who helps guide and support our mission. This year, that honor goes to the Honorable Mark Colombell, U.S. Magistrate Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia. His participation continues a meaningful partnership that has strengthened our organization for decades. This commitment is also reflected in

the planning of our annual Bench-Bar Conference. For the past 33 years, that event has been guided by an Honorary Chair from the judiciary. This year, the Honorable Richard Campbell.

The value of the bench-bar relationship extends beyond events. The RBA's Administration of Justice Committee meets with members of the judiciary each year to ensure their voices are heard across our membership. When vacancies arise on the bench, the work of our Judiciary Committee plays a critical role in evaluating candidates and making thoughtful recommendations to the General Assembly. These efforts reflect the mutual trust and open dialogue that exists between our legal community and the courts we serve.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the court clerks and their staff. Their work, often behind the scenes, keeps the system running at peak efficiency. From processing filings to answering questions and keeping courtrooms on track, their role in our daily practice cannot be overstated. They are an indispensable part of the justice system, and we are grateful for their dedication.

If you haven't renewed your RBA membership yet, please take a few moments to do so. Your support directly fuels these programs, these relationships, and the impact we're able to make collectively. The value of membership goes far beyond the events on our calendar; it lies in the relationships we build and the community we sustain.

Speaking of the calendar, there's much to look forward to this year. Whether you're seeking professional development, peer connection, or a way to get more involved, we know you'll find something that resonates with you.

Thank you for being part of the Richmond Bar Association and for contributing to the vibrant, collaborative legal community of which we are so proud to be members.

“ We talk often about professionalism and collegiality as core values of this Association, and nowhere is that more clearly demonstrated than in our longstanding partnership with the judiciary. ”

Jen West

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Annie M. Holland

When people ask me what makes the Richmond Bar Association special, I always come back to the same answer: it's the people. Not just the members, but the judges, the clerks, the committee volunteers, and the staff behind the scenes who all invest in this Association and in one another. That investment is what keeps the RBA strong, and what allows the Association to evolve alongside the profession.

This time of year is always a busy one at the RBA office. We are finalizing the details of fall events, supporting section programming, confirming sponsorships, and tracking membership renewals - just to name a few projects. But it's also a time when I get to see, up close, how connected our legal community really is. Our committees are hard at work: the Administration of Justice Committee is already engaging with members of the bench to ensure we're listening to their priorities and concerns. The Judiciary Committee is preparing for its role in evaluating candidates for upcoming court vacancies. And the Bench-Bar Conference planning committee (now in its 33rd year) has almost finalized another fantastic event.



That kind of collaboration doesn't just happen. It reflects over a century of trust, and a mutual commitment to strengthening the legal system. It also speaks to the level of engagement we're fortunate to have from the judiciary. From serving as Honorary Vice President- this year, the Honorable Mark Colombell- to participating in panels, socials, and mentoring young lawyers, our judges remain deeply involved in the work of the RBA. That presence matters and it makes RBA programs stronger while keeping the community more connected.

We are also grateful for the work of the Clerks of Court and their teams, who are a critical part of the legal infrastructure in this region. Their names may not always appear in program materials or headlines, but their work impacts nearly every practicing lawyer in the membership. I hope you'll join me in thanking them, not just with words, but with professional courtesy and respect in every interaction.

“

Whether you're looking to connect, learn, mentor, or simply feel more grounded in your professional community, I hope you'll be part of it.

”

If you've already renewed your membership, thank you. If you haven't yet, I hope you'll take a few moments to do so (and maybe invite a colleague to join you). The more members we have engaged, the stronger our programming, our reach, and our voice as an Association.

This bar year is full of excitement. From initiatives like our fall golf tournament and Lunch & Learn series, to long-standing programs like our CLE offerings and holiday events, we're working to make sure there's something valuable for everyone. Whether you're looking to connect, learn, mentor, or simply feel more grounded in your professional community, I hope you'll be part of it.

As always, I'm here to support you- whether you have a question about your membership, an idea for a program, or just want to get more involved. Thank you for the work you do every day, and for being part of the RBA.

- Annie Holland

JOIN THE RICHMOND BAR ASSOCIATION

CONNECT. LEARN. LEAD.

Your community for professional growth, trusted connection, and meaningful career impact.

As the oldest bar association in Virginia, the Richmond Bar Association has been a cornerstone of the region's legal community since 1885. With more than 1,300 members, the RBA is where legal professionals at all stages of their career come to find connection, support, and community.

GROW YOUR NETWORK

Build relationships that matter. From casual socials to signature luncheons with leading legal minds, RBA events foster genuine connections across firms, courts, and practice areas.

LEAD WHERE IT COUNTS

Shape the future of the profession through opportunities to serve on committees, join sections, and support critical initiatives that advance justice, integrity, and the rule of law.

BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

Whether you're new to practice or a seasoned veteran, the RBA offers a professional home where your voice is valued and your contributions make a difference.

ENJOY EXCLUSIVE MEMBER BENEFITS

Discounted CLE rates, free events, leadership opportunities, access to The Richmond Lawyer, our updated member portal, and more.

READY TO JOIN OR RENEW?

Visit www.richmondbar.org or contact us at (804) 780-0700 to learn more.

RICHMOND BAR COMMITTEE UPDATES

Awards & Honors Committee

The Awards & Honors Committee will meet in September to review nominations received for the Young Lawyer of the Year, Hill-Tucker Public Service, Hunter W. Martin Professionalism, and John C. Kenny Pro Bono Awards. The Committee thanks those that sent in such exceptional nominations.

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee remains focused on crafting publications and outreach to serve RBA members. If you have an idea for a feature, a column, or even an op-ed, please reach out to the bar office.

The Committee will meet again in late September.

Continuing Legal Education Committee

The CLE Committee has filled the RBA calendar for September and October! The Committee hopes that the CLEs they have put together for this year will bring value and insight to members and others who participate or attend these programs. Thank you to those who have worked so hard to pull off another great CLE calendar!

Judiciary Committee

The Judiciary Committee is actively seeking nominations for a vacancy in Chesterfield General District Court occasioned by the retirement of Judge O'Connell. The deadline for nominations is 12:00 noon on September 16, 2025. All nominations should be emailed to Annie Holland at aholland@richmondbar.org or mailed to the bar office at P.O. Box 1213, Richmond, VA 23218.

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee is closely monitoring RBA membership renewals and is happy to see enthusiasm for the RBA growing. The Committee welcomes any and all feedback on programs or benefits that would help the Association better serve their members.

Programs Committee

The Programs Committee has contributed to a substantial events calendar for the remainder of 2025, and is looking forward to planning even more events in 2026. There are currently almost two dozen RBA events planned.

The Committee encourages members to go to the RBA website and register for these upcoming events!

Pro Bono Committee

The Pro Bono Committee will meet in September and is actively seeking nominations for the John C. Kenny Pro Bono Award.

To nominate a deserving colleague, please email the bar office at aholland@richmondbar.org or mail your nomination to P.O. Box 1213, Richmond, VA 23218.

Sponsors Committee

The Sponsors Committee is focused on providing tangible and engaging benefits to RBA select and individual event sponsors. The Committee is thankful for each member of the community who has contributed to the success of their outreach so far and looks forward to the rest of the bar year.

RICHMOND BAR SECTION UPDATES

BANKRUPTCY SECTION

The Bankruptcy Section Executive Committee has been actively planning for the bar year ahead. The section will hold their first CLE & Luncheon of the bar year on September 9th beginning at 12:30 PM at Williams Mullen.

Registration is open until one week prior.

[Register here](#)

CORPORATE COUNSEL SECTION

The Corporate Counsel Section is collecting responses to their 2025-2026 survey [here](#). The survey will help the section plan events for the bar year and, in the long run, help the section grow as a valuable tool to those in the Corporate Counsel field of law.

FAMILY LAW SECTION

The Family Law Section has a full slate of events tentatively planned for the 25-26 bar year! The section will host a kickoff event on September 17th at Crafted, beginning at 6:00 PM.

[Register here.](#)

REAL ESTATE SECTION

The Real Estate Section is hard at work planning events such as joint CLEs, socials, and other meetings for the 2025-2026 bar year.

YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION

The Executive Committee of the Young Lawyers Section met in late August to plot out the fall events calendar. It is expected that the section will hold, as always, fun and engaging events for their members.

BUSINESS LAW SECTION

The Business Law Section Executive Committee is planning a fall social with details coming soon. In addition, the section plans to host a variety of events to bring value to the members of the section.

ENVIRONMENTAL & ENERGY SECTION

The Environmental & Energy Law Section is hard at work planning events such as joint CLEs, socials, and other meetings for the 2025-2026 bar year.

LITIGATION SECTION

The Litigation Section Executive Committee held their first meeting in August and is looking forward to hosting section events this bar year. In addition to new programs, the section looks forward to hosting the Annual Judges Reception in 2026.

SENIOR LAWYERS SECTION

The Senior Lawyers Section Executive Committee held a meeting in August and is planning to hold a program focused on elder fraud in the fall, with details coming soon.

If you know someone who is 60 years or older and would like to be involved in the Senior Lawyers Section, please contact the bar office!

The Attorney's Guide to a Clerk's Good Side

WE REACHED OUT TO CLERKS ACROSS THE REGION TO HEAR THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT THEY VALUE MOST AND HOW ATTORNEYS CAN HELP MAKE THEIR WORK MORE EFFICIENT.



Court clerks might not be the ones in front of the bench arguing a case, but without them, the wheels of justice would grind to a halt. They manage filings, keep the docket in order, guide attorneys through the maze of procedural requirements, and answer questions from the public. They do all this while juggling tight timelines, high expectations, and a constant stream of work. When attorneys make a clerk's job easier, the benefits ripple out. Matters move faster, communication improves, and everyone, clients included, feels the difference.

To get a firsthand perspective, we reached out to clerks in our area to hear what they enjoy about their work and what makes for a strong attorney-clerk partnership.

Linda J. Moore, Clerk of Court for the Chesterfield General District Court:

"Being a Clerk is a position that is never complacent. I am very fortunate to be able to work with such extraordinary people. New challenges arise daily, and those experiences help you to continue to learn and grow."

Laura G. Griffin, Chief Deputy Clerk of Court, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia:

"I most enjoy helping people – whether it is the attorneys who practice here, the public, or staff who have questions, I want to be able to help. I am deeply committed to this, and I love being able to improve a process or help develop an employee who desires growth – those are things that make me feel like I am contributing to the work and mission of the Court."

These aren't just polite sentiments. They reflect the reality that clerks genuinely want attorneys to succeed, but the relationship relies on both Clerk and Attorney doing their part.

CLERKS OF COURT

Richmond General District Court
Cecelia V. Garner

Richmond Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
Felicia Edmonds-Rustin

Richmond Circuit Court
Hon. Edward F. Jewett

Chesterfield General District Court
Linda J. Moore

Chesterfield Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
Jennifer Goga Nicely

Chesterfield Circuit Court
Amanda L. Pohl

Henrico General District Court
Linda S. Knight

Henrico Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court
Erin Cowardin Jacoby

Henrico Circuit Court
Hon. Heidi S. Barshinger



What Attorneys Can Do Right Now

While every court has its own quirks, there are a few universal habits that can make your interactions with clerks smoother and more productive:

1. Know (and follow) the local rules. They change more often than many realize. Even a small oversight can mean extra steps for the clerk and delays for you.
2. Double-check your submissions. Missing attachments, incomplete forms, or unclear instructions eat up valuable time.
3. Respect their timelines. Emergency filings happen, but if “urgent” becomes your default, it puts strain on the entire office.
4. Use the right channels. If the office prefers emails to phone calls, follow that preference. If there’s an online portal, use it correctly.
5. Be courteous. This should be obvious, but in the rush of a busy day it’s easy to forget. A respectful tone makes a difference.
6. Collaborate on solutions. If something isn’t right, work together to fix it!

“The best court days happen when clerks and attorneys are in step with one another. That partnership keeps the process moving and the atmosphere professional.”

Why It Matters

The clerk’s office is often the first and last point of contact for your case outside the courtroom. A good relationship here can mean faster answers, fewer headaches, and a smoother experience overall.

Think of it as professional karma: invest a little effort into making their job easier, and you might just find your own workdays become less stressful in return. The small things, like being on time, being prepared, being kind, are what add up.

So, next time you head into court or send a filing, remember the people on the other side of that counter or inbox. They are the ones making sure the right documents get to the right place at the right time. Treat them as the valuable partners they are, and you’ll both be better for it.



Latham & Martin



THE FIRM STORY

Latham & Martin was founded two years ago by Wiley Latham, IV and Kelly Martin, who each have practiced personal injury law in Richmond for over 15 years. After nearly two decades of serving the injured throughout Virginia, they came together to create a firm rooted in client-focused advocacy and results-driven representation. What began as a two-person office has since grown into a team of seven dedicated professionals. With deep roots in the Richmond community, Latham & Martin continues to build a strong reputation for integrity, compassion, and a relentless commitment to justice.

THE MISSION OF THE FIRM →

Our mission is to provide unparalleled legal representation to the injured, with a commitment to personalized service, clear communication, and efficient case resolution. We strive to secure justice and meaningful outcomes for our clients while treating each case with the care and attention it deserves.

2

**RICHMOND
ATTORNEYS**

2

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WORKPLACE CULTURE

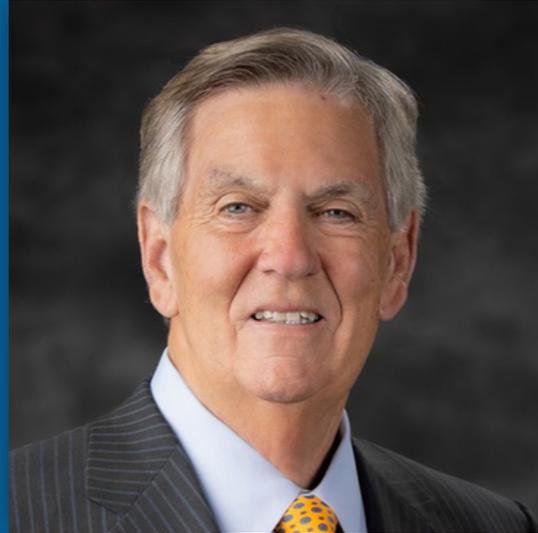
Latham & Martin fosters a culture that is collaborative, compassionate, and client-centered. We value professionalism and excellence, but we also prioritize mutual respect, mentorship, and a supportive work environment. Our team works closely together, shares knowledge freely, and celebrates collective wins. While we take our cases seriously, we also understand the importance of balance, approachability, and maintaining a strong sense of purpose in our work.

THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING AT LATHAM & MARTIN

The best part about working at Latham & Martin is the opportunity to make a meaningful difference for real people. Every case is personal — and we treat it that way. We're proud to work in an environment where everyone's contributions matter, where clients are treated like family, and where results are driven by teamwork and trust. Knowing that our work helps people heal, rebuild, and move forward makes it incredibly rewarding.

The McCammon Group

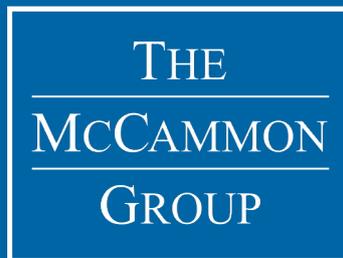
is pleased to announce our newest Neutral



Hon. Lee A. Harris, Jr. (Ret.)

Former Chief Judge, 14th Judicial Circuit Court of Virginia, Henrico County

The Honorable Lee A. Harris, Jr., the longest-serving judge in the Commonwealth of Virginia, recently retired after 35 years of distinguished judicial service on the bench of the Henrico County Circuit Court, including three terms as Chief Judge. His judicial career began as a Judge of the General District Court in Henrico County, where he served for two years. Early in his legal career, Judge Harris served as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney for Henrico County and later as the Commonwealth's Attorney in that office. He also enjoyed a private law practice in Richmond, litigating a wide range of civil, criminal, and family law cases. Judge Harris now brings this record of dedication and accomplishment to The McCammon Group to serve the mediation, arbitration, judge *pro tempore* and special master needs of lawyers and litigants throughout the Commonwealth.



For a complete list of our services and Neutrals throughout VA, DC, and MD,
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MEMBER HIGHLIGHT**SARAH ROBB**
SARAH ROBB LAW**FAVORITE THING ABOUT PRACTICING IN RICHMOND?**

Before I opened my firm and began practicing solo, I took for granted having wise advice readily available to me, but I have needed it more than ever on my own! Asking for guidance from attorneys I do not know or do not know well was uncomfortable at first, but the Richmond legal community has been absolutely incredible. I am beyond grateful for the overwhelming support and generosity of time and advice I have received from so many of you, and I love knowing I am among friends in any RBA event or courthouse I enter here.

**WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?**

When I talk with a new client, they are trusting me with their story during what is often a very difficult, confusing time personally and professionally. After talking through legal options and other paths forward, even when the end result is not yet clear, I often hear my client take a deep breath, like they are able to release even a little of the heaviness they have been carrying around. I feel honored when I can help someone in that way.

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

The best advice I ever received was that love is a verb. It is easy to see how this applies at home, but in the law it reminds me that caring about my clients and communities means actively working to make things better.

WHAT DOES YOUR PERFECT WEEKEND OFF LOOK LIKE?

My perfect weekends are summer weekends spending time with our three young daughters and close friends at the pool- I would not trade that time for anything. On Saturday evenings Jack and I have a standing date at home with sushi from Akida, champagne, and tv. We have been doing some iteration of that for nearly 20 years now, and a weekend without it just is not the same.

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

I would tell my law student self that there is truly no such thing as having it all figured out. Unexpected twists and turns, good and bad, are inevitable, and stressing about changes to "the plan" is wasted energy. During times when the unforeseen happens, it is ok to simply follow Anna in Frozen II's advice to focus on doing the next best thing.

NEED TO MAKE A REFERRAL? WE'VE GOT A DIRECTORY FOR THAT.



The RBA's online Member Directory is your go-to tool for trusted referrals.

Easily search by name, firm, or area of practice and connect your clients with colleagues you know and trust.

Available anytime at **www.richmondbar.org**.

Just log in to your member portal and click "Member Directory."

WHY READING FICTION MAKES YOU A BETTER LAWYER

What can a litigator learn from Russian literature? More than you'd think.



Brooke Gerber
3L, University of Richmond

Brooke Gerber is a third-year law student at the University of Richmond School of Law. With degrees in English and Communication Studies from Vanderbilt University, she is passionate about exploring the intersection between literature and legal thought, particularly through her studies of Austen and Shakespeare. She currently serves as Managing Editor of the University of Richmond Journal of Law & Technology and Treasurer of Richmond Women's Law. Outside of law school, she spends her time writing and discovering neighborhood gems around Richmond.

When your day job involves analyzing contracts, briefing motions, and poring over case law, reading for pleasure can feel like an indulgence – or even a chore. But what if reading fiction didn't just offer a break from your legal work, but actually improved it?

Emerging research and anecdotal wisdom from Judges suggest that fiction isn't just entertainment. It may sharpen empathy, improve narrative instincts, and help lawyers wrestle with the moral ambiguity that often presents itself in legal practice. From Anna Karenina to Great Expectations, fiction holds lessons for litigators on how to better understand their clients, build persuasive arguments, and grapple with ethical complexity.

Dr. Keith Oatley, a cognitive psychologist and novelist at the University of Toronto, has studied the link between reading literary fiction and what psychologists call the “theory of mind” – our ability to infer others' beliefs, desires, and intentions. In one study, Dr. Oatley found that participants who read literary fiction outperformed those who read nonfiction or other genres in empathy and social reasoning tasks. For lawyers, these aren't abstract traits; rather, they're tools of the trade that help us succeed on a daily basis. Reading about complex characters trains us, even passively, to read between the lines in client interviews, anticipate opposing counsel's next move, or sense when a witness is holding something back.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has spoken frequently about the role fiction has played in shaping her judicial outlook. In interviews and speeches, she describes how novels offered an escape from her difficult childhood and a window into the experiences of others. Through fiction, she developed what she calls “imaginative empathy,” or the ability to see the world through someone else's eyes, a skill she considers essential to making fair judgments. For Justice Sotomayor, reading is not a retreat from legal reasoning; it is a critical way to cultivate the empathy for others and reflect on the moral values that fair judging requires.

Legal work is, in many ways, storytelling under constraints. A strong appellate brief has a narrative arc.

A persuasive opening statement frames the facts with a beginning, middle, and end. Good fiction, by immersing the reader in pacing, tone, and character, can sharpen these skills. Consider a novel like *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which is steeped in questions of justice, evidence, and moral duty. Atticus Finch’s demeanor in the courtroom isn’t just words on a page; it is an example of how lawyers can use narrative to humanize their client and persuasively frame a case. Whether consciously or not, reading fiction trains lawyers to think about how facts are presented and received, and to bestow the power of a narrative unto those ready to wield it.

But it’s not just courtroom fiction that holds merit. Fiction as a whole builds tolerance for ambiguity, a skill that is imperative to the practice of law. Legal professionals live in the so-called moral grey area on a daily basis. Should the prosecutor offer a plea deal? When does zealous advocacy cross into deception? Stories like *Les Misérables*, which dissects the ethical dilemma between Jean Valjean’s theft of bread and Inspector Javert’s rigid adherence to the law, offer no easy answers. These narratives don’t define ethics but instead provide us with the tools to deepen our understanding of what’s at stake when real people, rather than characters, stand before the law.

Beyond empathy and ethical reflection, fiction hones a lawyer’s narrative craft. While every case presents a set of facts, how those facts are woven into a compelling story often determines the outcome. Through lessons in pacing, tension, and character development, fiction teaches readers how to build narratives that resonate with judges and juries alike. By studying how authors create suspense, reveal motives, and frame conflicts, lawyers can transform complex legal arguments into persuasive stories that stick.

So, does reading fiction make you a better lawyer? Maybe not immediately. But over time, it can refine your narrative sense, enhance your empathy, and teach you to sit with the complexity – traits that elevate good lawyers into great ones. In a field that prizes logic, precedent, and precision, fictional worlds provide a value innately separate from our everyday legal training. By picking up a novel, you make an active choice to better yourself (and, hopefully, enjoy a good story along the way).

Fiction won’t replace casebooks or courtrooms, but it does something they cannot: it immerses us in the lived experiences of others, sharpens our moral intuition, and reminds us that the law, at its core, is about people.

And, on occasion, fiction includes dragons – which is a delightful bonus.

SEPTEMBER CLE SEMINARS

<p>Sept. 4</p> <p>“DEI in the Workplace” & “Gender Equity in Legal Practice”</p> <p><i>Register for one or both seminars</i></p> <p>4:00–6:00PM</p>	<p>Sept.18</p> <p>“Understanding Your Client’s Immigration Status”</p> <p>4:00–6:00 PM</p>	<p>Sept.23</p> <p>“VA Appellate Law: Interlocutory Decisions & Oral Argument Tips”</p> <p>4:00–6:00 PM</p>	<p>Sept.25</p> <p>“Virginia Civil Case Law Update”</p> <p>3:00–5:00 PM</p>
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PRO BONO BULLETIN

The Central Virginia 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:

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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.

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TOO BUSY FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT?

Why a Simple Plan Will Save You Time

For busy lawyers, marketing and business development (MBD) can feel like just another item on an already overloaded to-do list. But if you want a strong book of business, having a simple MBD plan is essential. It helps you focus your efforts, use your time wisely, and make progress without feeling like you're constantly playing catch-up.

Essential Marketing Tools

Two of your most powerful marketing tools are already working for you (or against you) every day: your website bio and LinkedIn profile. These are often the first places prospects, referrals, and even current clients go to learn more about you. When was the last time you read either of these? If you can't remember, it's time to revisit and make updates to ensure they are reflective of your current practice.



A few tips:

- Keep it scannable. Avoid dense sentences and use bullet points when possible.
- Use first person on LinkedIn and third person on your firm website bio.
- Focus on how you help clients and the value you bring, not just what you do.

Demonstrate Your Expertise

Demonstrating your expertise keeps

you top of mind with potential clients, helps existing clients refer work to you, and makes it easier for colleagues to cross-sell your services. This might take the form of a firm blog post, client alert, LinkedIn update, or speaking engagement.

To make this work for you:

- Ensure that your content aligns with what your prospects are interested in.

“The most successful lawyers I’ve worked with don’t have more time, they are simply consistent and intentional in their marketing and business development activities.”



Rebecca Edwards Hnatowski
President, Edwards Advisory LLC

Rebecca Edwards Hnatowski is the founder of Edwards Advisory, LLC, a marketing and business development consultancy that specializes in providing tailored strategies to help lawyers develop and maintain strong client relationships, even when time is limited.

With nearly two decades of experience, including tenure at small, mid-sized and large law firms, Rebecca brings a wealth of knowledge to the table. She approaches each engagement with an insatiable curiosity and a deep sense of empathy, understanding the unique styles, strengths, and preferences of each client.

An active member of the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) throughout her career, Rebecca has served as Co-Chair of Strategies & Voices, on the Board of Directors for the Mid-Atlantic Region, and the President of the Virginias Chapter. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Elon University.

- Share your content with your clients, referral sources and network directly.
- Most importantly, be consistent. Decide on a cadence that feels doable (e.g., a monthly blog, a weekly LinkedIn post) and stick with it.

Cultivate Relationships

Building strong relationships are the backbone of an effective business development strategy. Whether you are reconnecting with past clients or meeting new contacts, prioritize meaningful engagements.

Try this:

- Attend events where your clients and prospects are already showing up. Think industry conferences or bar association programs.
- Reach out to your existing clients and referral sources. When was the last time you got together for lunch or coffee?
- You're not inconveniencing them. Ask to get together. If they're not local, suggest a Zoom catch-up, a walking phone call, or even comment on their LinkedIn posts to stay top of mind.

Map Your Network

You can't nurture every contact at once. Mapping your network helps you focus on the relationships that matter most.

Here's how to start:

- Identify your key connections. These are the people in a position to send you work (think: current clients, former clients, referral sources, and prospects). If you're earlier in your career, this might include law school classmates or board service colleagues.
- For each contact, decide how often you'll check in and how you'll connect (e.g., email, text, lunch, or a Squirrels game invite), and block that time on your calendar.

Make Real Progress

The most successful lawyers I've worked with don't have more time, they are simply consistent and intentional in their marketing and business development activities. A steady, focused approach builds momentum and makes MBD feel like a natural part of your routine, not an extra task.

Focus on how you help clients and the value you bring, not just what you do.

Ask yourself:

- Can you carve out 15 minutes a week to revisit your strategy or calendar touchpoints?
- Can you spend one hour a month penning content that reflects your expertise?
- Can you book two business development meetings a month with existing clients or prospects?

Get Support

Need help staying accountable? Communicate your goals with your assistant or marketing team. They can help keep you on track and make sure your efforts don't fall off the radar.

Building a book of business doesn't require overhauling your schedule or adding hours to your week. With the right plan, you can be intentional, consistent, and effective – all without burning out. If you'd like a simple template to get started – or more tips tailored to your practice – feel free to reach out (rebecca@edwards-advisory.com). I'm happy to share resources that can help you create a marketing and business development plan that actually works for you.

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