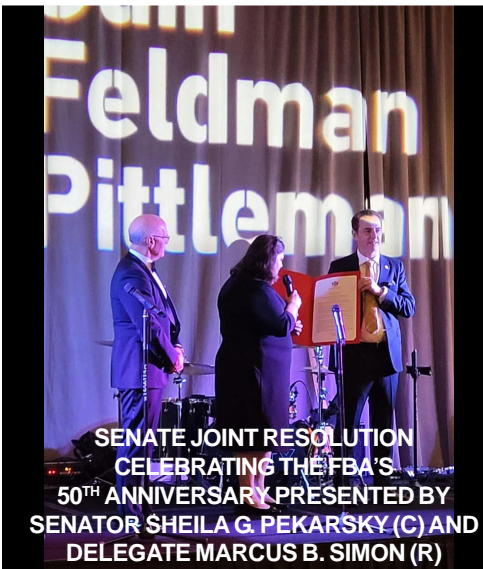


JOURNAL

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EMBRACING CHANGE—PART II

By Steven D. Briglia, Esq.,
President of the Fairfax Bar Association

Perhaps with the passing of time, one gains "perspective." As we mark the 50th anniversary of the Fairfax Bar Association, I find it helpful—in keeping with my theme of embracing change—to reflect on how much our society has transformed over the past half-century. So, in general, how have things changed in the past 50 years?

Where were we 50 years ago in 1976?

Political & Global Milestones:

- U.S. Bicentennial: The United States celebrated its 200th anniversary of independence on July 4, featuring a fleet of "Tall Ships" in New York Harbor and visits from global figures like Queen Elizabeth II.
- Montreal Olympics: Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci scored the first-ever perfect 10.0, and Caitlyn Jenner (then Bruce) won gold in the decathlon.
- Jimmy Carter's Election: In November, Democrat Jimmy Carter defeated incumbent Gerald Ford to become the 39th U.S. President.
- Death of Mao Zedong: The founding father of the People's Republic of China died.
- End of South Vietnam: On July 2, North and South Vietnam officially unified to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- The Eagles released the Hotel California album.

Tech & Science Breakthroughs:

- Birth of Apple & Microsoft: Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak formed Apple Computer Company on April 1st, while Microsoft (Bill Gates) was officially registered as a company on November 26, 1976.
- Viking 1 Mars Landing: On July 20, the U.S. probe Viking 1 became the first spacecraft to successfully land on Mars and transmit high-quality color photos of its surface.
- Space Shuttle Enterprise: NASA unveiled its first space shuttle named Enterprise after the Star Trek vessel, on September 17.
- Concorde Service: The world's first supersonic passenger service began with the Concorde taking its inaugural commercial flights in January.

Where are we now in 2026? - Biggest Changes:

In the 50 years since 1976, the world has shifted from a primarily analog, localized society to a digitally interconnected "global village." This era has been defined by the rapid rise of personal technology, the globalization of the economy, and profound social transformations.

The Digital/Technology Revolution:

Technology has been the most visible catalyst for change, moving from room-sized mainframes to powerful pocket-sized computers.

- Cellphones: The rise of cellular technology revolutionized communication
- Personal Computing: The Apple II (1977) and IBM PC (1981) revolutionized home and office work. Today, smartphones are ubiquitous, giving billions of people instant access to the world's information.
- The Internet & Connectivity: The launch of the World Wide Web in 1991 transformed how we access information and communicate. Nearly half of the world's population is now online, replacing physical encyclopedias, letters, and newspapers with digital alternatives.
- Artificial Intelligence: Once the realm of science fiction, AI now powers decision-making in healthcare, finance, and entertainment.
- Cars that drive themselves
- Non-carbon-based energy is becoming a greater percentage of generation capacity

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FAIRFAX BAR JOURNAL

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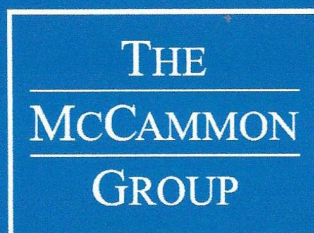
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By Amy S. Griggs, Esq., Fairfax Law Foundation President



SPRINGING FORWARD WITH THE FAIRFAX LAW FOUNDATION

One of the greatest strengths of the Fairfax legal community is our shared commitment to connection, service, and professional growth. The Fairfax Law Foundation is proud to help foster those values through programs that bring members of the bar together in meaningful ways.

Earlier this winter, members of the bar participated in the annual Chocolate Lovers Festival in Old Town Fairfax. As part of this beloved community tradition, attorneys volunteered their time to help present the Children's Mock Trial and the popular "*So You Think You're Smarter Than a Lawyer?*" game show, introducing young participants to the legal system in a fun and engaging way, while giving families a glimpse into the work of our profession.

February also brought opportunities for the bar to connect with one another. We partnered with the Fairfax Bar Association Young Lawyers Section to host the CLE program *Motion to Stand Out: How to Become an Exceptional Attorney*. The following evening, members of our legal community gathered for a *Night at the Theatre* to see *Between Riverside and Crazy* at 1st Stage Theatre in Tysons, followed by a reception that provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with colleagues outside the courtroom.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for one of the Foundation's most anticipated—and most important—events of the year: the Heroes vs. Villains Run for Justice 5K. This annual race is more than just a fun morning for runners and walkers. It is a cornerstone fundraising event that helps support the Foundation's educational programming, community outreach, and initiatives that strengthen access to justice in Fairfax County.

The event brings together lawyers, judges, law firms, families, and community members for a morning that reflects both the professionalism and the personality of our bar. Participants are encouraged to come dressed as their favorite hero or villain, and the race has become a joyful tradition where colleagues gather not in courtrooms or conference rooms, but on the starting line. To make the event a success, we need the support of the entire Fairfax legal community. There are several ways to get involved:

- Run or walk in the race. Whether you are a seasoned runner or simply want to enjoy a morning with colleagues and friends, your participation helps make the event vibrant and successful. Dress as your favorite superhero or villain!
- Register a team from your law firm or organization. Firm participation adds energy and friendly competition to the event. Team costumes welcomed!
- Become a sponsor. Sponsorships help underwrite the event and directly support the Foundation's mission.
- Volunteer on race day. Volunteers help ensure the event runs smoothly and create a welcoming and safe experience for participants and families.

Events like the Heroes vs. Villains 5K demonstrate what makes the Fairfax legal community unique. When lawyers, judges, and community members come together in support of the Foundation's work, we strengthen both our profession and the community we serve. I encourage you to join us by running, sponsoring, volunteering, or simply cheering on your colleagues.

Thank you for your continued support of the Fairfax Law Foundation and the important work it makes possible. ■

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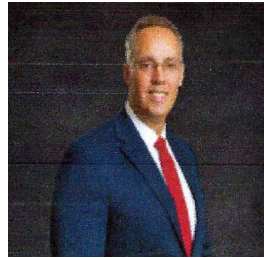
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JUDICIAL FEEDBACK PROGRAM

By Beth A. Bittel, Esq., Ombudsman, Fairfax County Circuit Court

In 2004, the Hon. Donald P. McDonough, then Chief Judge of the Fairfax County General District Court, approached the Fairfax Bar Association (FBA) to consider the creation of a program to provide attorneys with an informal mechanism to offer feedback, both positive and negative, to a particular judge about his or her demeanor on the Bench.¹ After review and debate, the FBA voted unanimously to implement a pilot “Judicial Feedback Program” in the Fairfax County General District Court, effective April 1, 2005. Ultimately, a permanent Judicial Feedback Program was implemented in all three (3) courts of the 19th Judicial Circuit. More than twenty (20) years later, it remains an important service provided by the FBA.

The goal of the Judicial Feedback Program, also referred to as “the Ombudsman Program,” is to provide attorneys appearing in the courts of the 19th Judicial Circuit with a safe space to anonymously communicate performance related feedback to a specific judge in a non-confrontational manner. Pursuant to the Rules of the Judicial Feedback Program promulgated by the FBA Board of Directors (Rules of the Program), only feedback that is professional in nature relating to a judge’s demeanor, a judge’s policies, and/or the procedures that a judge employs in the general conduct of his or her courtroom are considered appropriate and eligible for inclusion in this program. Comments submitted by an attorney regarding the validity of a specific decision or ruling by a judge are inappropriate and ineligible for consideration in order to avoid *ex parte* communications and/or the attempted use of this program as a substitute for appropriate motions or appeals.

It must be emphasized that this is not a judicial evaluation process, nor does this program attempt to serve as a substitute for the formal mechanisms that exist to address and resolve problematic behavior by members of the Bench. Rather, the Judicial Feedback Program is an outstanding example of a proactive judiciary to openly solicit input from attorneys who regularly appear before a judge in this jurisdiction on how he or she might improve his or her performance as a judge. As the term “ombudsman” conveys, the program aims to provide a confidential forum for attorneys to identify an issue of concern about a specific judge so that such issues may be addressed and remedied promptly on an informal basis.

The Rules of the Program specifically permit each judge in the 19th Judicial Circuit to opt in or out of the program at any time. Presently, 100% of the judges on each court have opted into the program. Upon appointment to the Bench, each judge selects a representative to serve as his or her facilitator (the Judge’s Facilitator) to receive communications through the program on his or her behalf. An ombudsman (the Ombudsman) is appointed to serve on each court to spearhead the program, to receive any feedback submitted by attorneys through the program, and to communicate eligible feedback to the Judge’s Facilitator.

Comments can be submitted to the Ombudsman of the applicable court in writing or in person, and the feedback can be anonymous or not. If the feedback received is anonymous and if it satisfies the eligibility requirements, the comments will be forwarded by the Ombudsman to the Judge’s Facilitator to be presented to the judge. Written comments are to be provided on a form which can be obtained at the FBA offices or in the “Members Section” of the FBA website. The written comments can be forwarded by an attorney to the Judicial Feedback Program c/o the FBA Office or they can be provided to the Ombudsman of the applicable court directly.² If an attorney wishes to meet and present feedback to the Ombudsman in person, he or she will also be given that opportunity.

When judicial feedback is presented, in writing or in person, the Ombudsman of the applicable court reviews the submission to verify that it is in compliance with the Rules of the Program. If the Ombudsman determines that the feedback or the comments do not meet the eligibility requirements of the program, the Ombudsman will contact the attorney providing the feedback (if the sender’s identity is known) to advise that the submission does not meet the eligibility requirements, and further, to advise what changes are necessary to satisfy the Rules of the Program.

All feedback compliant with the Rules of the Program will be provided by the Ombudsman to the Judge’s Facilitator who will promptly convey the comments to the judge. It is important to note that the Rules of the Program do not require a response from a judge when feedback is presented to him or her. Any response that a judge elects to provide will be communicated by the Judge’s Facilitator back to the Ombudsman for the purpose of preserving the anonymity of the reporter. The Ombudsman will convey a judge’s response to the originating attorney.

¹ This concept was loosely based on a similar program that had been established at the time by the Palm Beach County Bar Association in Florida.

² The FBA will provide the name and contact information of the Ombudsman for each court upon request.

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GENERAL DISTRICT COURT COMMITTEE UPDATE

By Bryan T. Kennedy, Esq., Co-Chair

The General District Court Committee is starting a new project in the coming months to update and publicize the policies and procedures of the Court. We are always looking for help or feedback, so if you are interested please reach out to chair Bryan Kennedy at bkennedy@vadefenders.org. A description of our project is below.

Prior to 2017, the Court updated and released a policies and procedures manual each year. After that, the County created a website for the Court and strongly encouraged all public facing information to be put on the website. The Court, through the Clerk of Court, made and maintains this website. Most, but not all, of the information that was in the old manual made it on the website, so creating the website was a huge endeavor.

Six years ago, at the start of pandemic-related restrictions, the Court developed many new policies and procedures to respond to that crisis and to respond to a variety of new laws from the General Assembly and the County. Given the speed and frequency at which these changes were being made, most, but not all, of the changes were on the website. Some of these changes continue to this day, but others do not. Additionally, there has been a significant turnover of Judges on the Court, which has also led to different practices being adopted formally or informally.

Given the amount of changes that have happened since 2017, the Committee thought it would be useful to conduct a review of the Court's website to see if the information on the website reflects the current practice of the Court. The ideal for the website would be so that a member of the public, counsel who is new to the jurisdiction, or an experienced practitioner looking for best practices, could quickly consult the website and get as up-to-date information as we can offer. Currently we have groups working on reviewing the website on both the criminal and civil side, from a variety of perspectives, to determine what updates or gaps might be necessary.

To that end, if you have been on the Court's website and have seen something that is incorrect or inaccurate, please let us know. If you think there is some information you have learned about a Court practice that would be helpful to be on the website, please also let us know that. We will include those observations in our discussions about the extent to which updates are necessary.

Once this review is finished, we will likely be working in subcommittees to suggest language to the Court for the website. This will be done in consultation with the Court and the Clerk. If you would like to be a part of this process in the coming months, please contact us as we would welcome the help. Finally, as part of this process if you have a suggestion about how the Court could operate better, please communicate that. This may be a good time to suggest updated policies and procedures to the Court, so if you have been sitting on an idea, please reach out!

Again, please contact Bryan Kennedy if you would like to become involved in this project, or if you would like to join us for our committee meetings. We meet virtually at 4:00 PM on the second Tuesday of each month. If you have any other issues you would like to bring up with the Committee, please share them with Bryan. ■

GMU RECRUITING EVENT



*Barkley Horn, Esq; FBA President
Steven D. Briglia, Esq; and
Hannah Littlefield, 2026
GMU President*



FBA YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE LOCAL LEGAL COMMUNITY

By Hannah Littlefield, Esq., President and Barkley Horn, Esq., Vice President

This bar year, the Fairfax Bar Association Young Lawyers Section (FBA YLS) is proud to have introduced two new events and strengthened its relationships with local legal organizations, including the Arlington County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and the Fairfax Law Foundation.

In October 2025, the FBA YLS hosted an inaugural Halloween happy hour with the Arlington County Bar Association Young Lawyers Section at Solace Outpost in Falls Church City, a convenient midpoint between the two counties. The idea for the event grew out of a simple observation: although young lawyers in Fairfax and Arlington practice in neighboring jurisdictions, there are relatively few opportunities for them to meet one another and attend each other's events. The happy hour was intended to create that connection and encourage greater participation between the two groups going forward. The costume-optional gathering, sponsored by Steno Court Reporting, drew an enthusiastic crowd and set a relaxed and welcoming tone for the evening. Several attendees embraced the Halloween spirit with creative costumes, including a memorable appearance by a stick of butter and Chief Judge Wheat of the Arlington Circuit Court. To the best of our knowledge, this marked the first joint event between the Fairfax and Arlington Young Lawyers Sections, and we are hopeful that it will be the beginning of a lasting partnership between the two organizations.

Then, in February 2026, the FBA YLS partnered with the Fairfax Law Foundation (FLF) to present a new half-day CLE program designed for young attorneys seeking to develop practical skills and strengthen their legal practice. The program addressed a range of topics relevant to early-career lawyers, including the habits and characteristics of effective attorneys, maintaining productivity in an increasingly digital practice environment, strategies for motions practice and discovery, and practical guidance for taking and defending depositions. The program featured a distinguished group of generous speakers (lawyers and judges) drawn from the Fairfax legal community, many of whom are widely respected for their experience and mentorship of younger practitioners. Attendance was strong, and the feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. The program concluded with a happy hour, sponsored by Tysons Trial Law and Blankingship & Keith, that gave attendees the opportunity to continue conversations with the speakers and connect with colleagues in a more informal setting.

Both the FBA YLS and the FLF hope to build on the success of this inaugural CLE and offer it again next year. The goal is to establish the program as a regular spring CLE that provides practical guidance and mentorship for newer members of the bar. One of the most encouraging aspects of the event was the strong interest shown by young attorneys not only in improving their practice skills, but also in becoming more involved with the FBA and the FLF. It was particularly rewarding to see such a large group of engaged young lawyers gathered to learn from experienced members of the bar. The event served as a reminder of the strong culture of mentorship and collegiality that characterizes the Fairfax legal community.

Looking ahead, the FBA YLS will host several upcoming events this spring and summer. On April 7, 2026, the Section will hold its biannual Cocktails with the Circuit Court Judges at Kelly's Oyster House. This event offers young lawyers an opportunity to meet and speak with members of the Fairfax County Circuit Court in an informal setting. The annual Lawyerpalooza event will follow on June 13, 2026. For those who are not familiar with the tradition, Lawyerpalooza is a relaxed outdoor gathering held at a local winery or brewery that brings together lawyers, their families, and members of the broader legal community for an afternoon of food, conversation, and raffle prizes.

The FBA YLS also looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the FLF through supporting the FLF's community events. Members of the Section plan to volunteer and participate in the Foundation's 15th Annual Heroes vs. Villains 5K on April 19, 2026. The event supports the Foundation's charitable work, while bringing together members of the legal community in a spirited and enjoyable setting.

continued on next page

FBA YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION...

continued from previous page

The FBA YLS is energized, engaged, and thriving, and looks forward to another strong year ahead. A core principle of the FBA YLS is building a community of support among young and new lawyers in Fairfax. After attending YLS events, many new lawyers have approached YLS Board members, or other fellow attorneys, to ask questions or to seek guidance. By attending a YLS event, you become part of our growing community of support, and ensure you have others in your corner when you have a quick question or need a favor! ■

CLE PROGRAM MOTION TO STAND OUT— HOW TO BECOME AN EXCEPTIONAL ATTORNEY

*Presented Jointly by the Fairfax Law Foundation and the
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EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS: THE LOW-BONO PROGRAM OF THE COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALS OF VIRGINIA

By Christine Hissong, Esq., Co-Chair, Alternative Dispute Resolution Section

There is an ever-increasing number of clients seeking out-of-court dispute resolution processes. As a result, the Collaborative Process has become more mainstream, particularly in divorce cases. It is now quite common for clients to walk through the door already aware of—and specifically requesting—the Collaborative Process.

There are many reasons this model appeals to divorcing couples. The Collaborative Process offers a structured, team-based approach designed to support both parties in reaching thoughtful, durable solutions. Collaborative attorneys do not threaten, strategize against, or attempt to take advantage of the other party. Instead, they guide their clients through a cooperative problem-solving process focused on mutually acceptable outcomes. Another hallmark of the Collaborative model is the use of neutral professionals. Couples typically work with a neutral financial expert who assists both parties in understanding assets, debts, income, and financial planning. This eliminates the cost and conflict associated with “dueling experts.” Participants are also committed to full and informal disclosure of all relevant information, which allows them to avoid the time, expense, and adversarial nature of formal discovery. Mental health professionals also play an important role on the Collaborative team. Divorce coaches and child specialists bring specialized training and experience that can be invaluable during a difficult transition. These professionals help clients manage communication, address emotional challenges, and develop durable parenting plans. They are particularly helpful in cases where families are navigating complex issues such as high conflict, substance abuse concerns, or mental health challenges.

For many families, one of the primary reasons to pursue the Collaborative Process is the desire to avoid the financial and emotional costs of litigation. While the Collaborative model is generally more efficient and cost-effective than traditional court proceedings, the cost of a full professional team can still be significant. For some families, that cost becomes a barrier to accessing a process that could benefit them greatly.

Recognizing this challenge, the Collaborative Professionals of Virginia (CPV)—formerly the Collaborative Professionals of Northern Virginia (CPNV)—developed a Low-Bono Program designed to expand access to the Collaborative Process.

The Low-Bono Program helps bridge the gap between *pro bono* services and full-fee representation. By offering reduced-rate professional services within a structured framework, the program allows many families to participate in the Collaborative model who might otherwise be unable to afford it. In doing so, it reflects a fundamental value within the Collaborative community: the belief that respectful, peaceful dispute resolution should be accessible to families across a range of economic circumstances.

Parameters of the Low-Bono Model

The CPV Low-Bono Program operates within a clear and structured framework to ensure that families receive meaningful professional support while keeping the process efficient and affordable. Each Collaborative team consists of two attorneys, one neutral financial professional, and one divorce coach. The professionals provide a total of up to 30 hours of service, which includes working toward a Marital Settlement Agreement (MSA), developing a parenting plan, drafting the agreement, and assisting with the processing of an uncontested divorce. Attorneys participating in the program do not represent clients in court or handle court orders other than the Final Order of Divorce. All services are provided through a virtual platform, allowing families from across Virginia to participate more easily.

Each professional charges the same rate, and the reduced hourly rates range from \$150 to \$200, and clients pay half of the estimated total cost in advance. Clients also complete intake, application, and waiver forms and pay a \$200 administrative fee to participate. Each professional signs an engagement agreement and receives advance payment from the clients.

Eligibility Guidelines

To ensure the program serves families who genuinely need reduced-cost services, CPV uses general household income guidelines:

- Couple with no children: \$96,480
- Couple with 1–2 children: \$130,560
- Couple with 3 or more children: \$139,920

continued on next page

FAMILY LAW SECTION

By Lauren W. Smith, Esq. and Michael Poe, Esq., Co-Chairs

The Family Law Section of the Fairfax Bar Association (FBA) was created by the FBA to enhance its members' knowledge of the law and court procedures in Fairfax. To that end, the Family Law Section holds regular meetings, either to address substantive family law topics or to introduce our membership to judges and/or court personnel. Since the pandemic, our meetings have been mostly virtual, generally on the second Monday of every month at 6:00 PM or on a Thursday at 12:00 or 12:30 PM. In advance of the meetings, members are emailed a description of the topics to be covered at the next meeting and information regarding the presenters. The Family Law Section also ensures that our members are as well-informed as possible about practicing before the Fairfax Courts by circulating the newest law clerk checklists every year.

When our meetings address substantive topics that impact the practice of family law, we generally apply for CLE credit for such meetings. This bar year we held a substantive meeting designed to introduce lawyers new to the divorce process to how to proceed with divorce cases in Fairfax. This meeting addressed both substantive divorce law and Fairfax local practices, and attendees did receive CLE credit for it.

In addition to keeping our membership abreast of what is happening within the Fairfax Court System, the Family Law Section assists our members with staying updated on the law. Family law generally arises out of state law, so it is critically important that our members are apprised of the most recent developments in the Virginia Legislature, the Court of Appeals of Virginia, and the Supreme Court of Virginia. Therefore, we provide a legislative update every April to keep our membership informed as to recently introduced bills that impact the domestic relations practice, the progress of the bills and whether they are enacted into law, and, when appropriate, important family law decisions issued by the Virginia Court of Appeals and the Virginia Supreme Court. This year the legislative update will be offered on April 30, 2026, and will focus on the new laws going into effect on July 1, 2026.

We also endeavor to provide our membership with the opportunity to meet new Circuit Court and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges and hear about their experiences, beliefs, preferences, and insights about family law. There are a number of new Circuit Court Judges, and this year we will be giving our membership the opportunity meet the six newest Circuit Court Judges on May 18, 2026.

Co-Chair Michael Poe (MPoe@livesaymyers.com) was appointed during the 2025-2026 Bar year to fill the role previously served by Mary C. Huff, who now serves on the FBA Board of Directors. The election of Family Law Co-chairs for the 2026-2027 Bar Year will take place at the April 30, 2026 meeting. If anyone wants to serve as an officer of the Family Law Section for 2026-2027, please reach out to either Michael Poe or Lauren W. Smith (laurenwallersmith@gmail.com) before that meeting and please plan to attend that meeting. ■

EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS...

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Additional Eligibility Considerations

Income guidelines provide an important starting point, but they do not always tell the entire financial story. For this reason, additional factors may be considered when determining eligibility.

For example, some families may fall within the income guidelines but have significant assets that provide financial resources beyond what the program is intended to support. In such cases, participation in the Low-Bono Program may not be appropriate. Conversely, some families may slightly exceed the income limits but face circumstances—such as substantial medical debt or other financial obligations—that make reduced-cost services appropriate.

The Collaborative Professionals of Virginia created the Low-Bono Program with a simple but powerful goal: to make the Collaborative Process available to more families. By reducing financial barriers while preserving the integrity of the Collaborative model, the program allows couples to resolve disputes with dignity, transparency, and professional guidance.

Divorce is often one of the most challenging transitions a family will experience. When families have access to a process that promotes communication, problem-solving, and respectful resolution, the benefits extend far beyond the legal outcome. They can influence how parents move forward, how children adjust, and how families rebuild after divorce.

For professionals and potential clients alike, the takeaway is simple: when in doubt, ask about eligibility. The Low-Bono Program exists to expand access to healthier conflict resolution, and a simple inquiry may open the door to a process that helps families move forward with greater stability, clarity, and peace. ■

Chocolate Lover's Festival

On February 7th, 2026, the Fairfax Law Foundation and the Fairfax Bar Association Law-Related Education Committee brought learning to life at the 34th Annual Chocolate Lover's Festival in Fairfax City with an engaging mock trial experience for children and families.

This year's featured case, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," gave young attendees a chance to see the courtroom in action, while the interactive game show, "So You Think You're Smarter Than a Lawyer?" added laughter, learning, and friendly competition to the day. Together, these activities made law-related education exciting, accessible, and memorable for the Fairfax community.

Thank you to our volunteers, including esteemed cast members Justice Thomas P. Mann, Supreme Court of Virginia, and Judge David A. Oblon, Fairfax County Circuit Court, for bringing the courtroom to life in a fun and accessible way and inspiring the next generation to better understand the rule of law. ■



FAIRFAX BAR ASSOCIATION *PRO BONO* COMMITTEE

By Mehagen D. McRae, Esq., Chair

For those who are Marvel Comic aficionados you know that Peter Parker's Uncle Ben imparts to Peter the iconic proverb "With great power comes great responsibility." Peter Parker, better known as Spider Man, develops great ability due to one bite by a radioactive spider. Lawyers have great ability without the bite of a radioactive spider. What we choose to do with that ability can be endless.

By becoming lawyers, we have been given a superpower to use the law to help those around us. We possess strength, influence, and power which necessitates that we act ethically, justly, and wisely for the common good. Uncle Ben reminds all of us not to abuse our legal gifts but to use them for helping others. As lawyers, one of the best ways to use our superpower for good is to do *pro bono* work. The term "*pro bono*," which is short for *pro bono publico*, is a Latin term that means "for the public good." And no, that does not mean writing off a client's bill who is no longer paying us under the terms of our retainer agreements.

We all know that we should do *pro bono* work each year but somehow other things get in the way of actually getting involved or we are afraid of a big time commitment with no compensation wrecking our billable hours and bonus structure. Several opportunities exist to do *pro bono* work without long time commitments that can make a positive difference in a person's life.

In January 2026, the Virginia State Bar launched Paladin, which is an online platform that allows attorneys to find *pro bono* cases throughout the state by categories. Paladin is located on the VSB website and is extremely easy to navigate. The cases are uploaded to the platform from Qualified Legal Services Providers, like local Legal Aid organizations and other nonprofit organizations. The cases have been screened for income eligibility. Paladin pairs a client in need with a licensed attorney to provide representation to that client. Please take a moment to look at the site and volunteer to take a case.

The Fairfax Bar Association also has local opportunities for attorneys to become involved in *pro bono* opportunities. In January, Firms in Service launched a free legal consultation project on select Fridays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. The project has been extremely successful with attorneys volunteering their time to assist persons without legal representation on current pending matters in the Circuit Court. The program provides legal advice and counsel only and no in-court representation. The time commitment is short and the assistance provided helps the client as well as the court by moving the docket along. A free CLE will be occurring in the Spring to provide guidance to those attorneys interested in volunteering. If you would like to find how to volunteer time on Fridays, please contact Amy Lee at the Self-Help Resource Center by emailing her at alee@fairfaxbar.org.

Attorneys can also volunteer time by being a conciliator in either the juvenile or circuit court. The Motions Conciliation Program is a free service that affords litigants an expeditious method of resolving motions and *pendente lite* disputes in civil actions pending before the Juvenile and Domestic Relations or Circuit Courts. The conciliators are experienced litigators, with expertise in either civil litigation or family law. They volunteer their services to help parties and their counsel resolve motions disputes, which are regularly scheduled to be heard on the Juvenile Court Wednesday Motions docket or the Circuit Court Friday Motions docket. Conciliators are typically present at the courthouse during the motions docket in Juvenile Court and are coming back on Fridays in Circuit Court. Conciliators are also available to confer with the parties or counsel by telephone prior to the day of their motion.

Conciliation is an informal confidential process that is focused on the issues presented by the motion pending in court. Trained conciliators are neutral and impartial, and do not give legal advice to either side of the dispute. They listen carefully to each party's positions and perspective, and then help the parties and counsel develop realistic and satisfactory ways to resolve the matter without a court hearing. Even when the motion is not completely resolved, conciliators are often able to achieve partial resolutions or to narrow the issues that need to be heard by the court. Sometimes, with the assistance of the conciliator, or as a result of the conciliation, the parties are able to resolve not only the disputed motion, but the entire case.

Conciliation may be initiated by making a request in open court on the day of the motion, provided that a conciliator is available, or in advance either by contacting the conciliation coordinator in a variety of ways. A party may request conciliation either by contacting the conciliation coordinator at fxconciliation@aol.com, or by submitting a Conciliation Request form by email to the above.

If you are interested in doing small acts that can change the life of another, please join the *Pro Bono* Committee on the first Thursday of the month from September to June! We meet virtually at 9:30 AM. Please email Mehagen McRae at mdm@fgmfamilylaw.com for additional information or inquiries. If you cannot make our meetings, but want to learn how to be involved in *pro bono* opportunities, please reach out to Mehagen McRae. ■



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Christine Lechoco –
703-385-8900
leasing@fostermgt.com

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

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Economic & Global Shifts:

The global economic landscape has seen a massive "center of gravity" shift, particularly toward Asia.

- **The Rise of China:** Since 2000, China has overtaken major economies to become the world's second-largest economy, lifting over 800 million people out of poverty in 50 years.
- **Globalization:** International travel and trade has expanded nearly fourfold since the early 1980s. This led to a "borderless" economy where products are designed in one country and manufactured in another, though it also contributed to the decline of manufacturing in regions like the U.S. Rust Belt.
- **Financial Evolution:** In 1976, most people handled finances in cash. The invention and mass adoption of credit and debit cards, followed by digital banking apps, have made cash increasingly rare in retail.

Social & Cultural Transformation

The structure of daily life, family, and rights has undergone seismic shifts.

- **Women in the Workforce:** In 1976, the "typical" woman was often a housewife; today, over 60% of women are in the workforce, and they earn degrees at higher rates than men in many countries.
- **LGBTQ+ Rights:** In 1976, homosexuality was often still classified as a mental disorder in many places; today, same-sex marriage is legal in over 30 countries, and societal acceptance has grown significantly.
- **Demographic Changes:** The world population has doubled from roughly 4 billion in 1974 to over 8 billion today. Diversity has increased in the West due to shifts in immigration patterns from Europe to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- **Continued urbanization?** But with opportunities for remote access and virtual employment, we may see a shift away from traditional City/Suburban employment

Health & Environment

- **Lifespan & Medicine/More Health Awareness:** Human life expectancy has increased by about 12 years since the mid-20th Century due to medical breakthroughs like the eradication of smallpox (1980), advanced cardiovascular treatments, and Messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccine technology.
- **Climate Awareness:** Environmental concern has moved from the fringes to the center of global policy. While awareness of pollution grew in the 1970s, the 21st Century has focused on the existential threat of climate change and the transition to renewable energy.

What hasn't Changed?

- **Undeclared Wars:** The Korean and Vietnam conflicts were undeclared wars; the US is still struggling with this Constitutional dilemma.
- The generalization that things were better in the past

WHAT IS THE FUTURE (just a guess)?

- DATA Centers and their associated strain on infrastructure
- Integration of Artificial Intelligence into our daily lives.
- Artificial Intelligence replacing or enhancing how many services (including legal services) will be provided.
- Increased emphasis on environmental impact locally, quality-of-life issues, and impact on global populations.
- Driverless cars and airplanes.
- Datalink implants.
- Medical advances that dramatically increase lifespans and quality of life.

When some people say, "Things are worse than they used to be," I usually reply now with, "That depends." If you ask a Millennial if they think it is better to have cellphones than not, they might respond (if you are a couple of generations older) "How did you even get by without cellphones and texting?" Well, we managed... .

What perspective usually shows is that even good change can be stressful. Change is inevitable, but being able to differentiate between good change, bad change, and just change for change's sake, is perhaps what we should be focused on. Regardless, some changes are coming whether we like them or not, but that still does not mean that we can't influence how they will impact our lives, professionally or personally.

EMBRACE CHANGE! ■

UPCOMING EVENTS/CLEs

TO STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH FBA EVENTS & PROGRAMS, VISIT www.fairfaxbar.org

EVALUATING ALLEGATIONS OF STRANGULATION: A MEDICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR THE DEFENSE AND ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS FOR CRIMINAL PRACTITIONERS CLE

Presented by the FBA's Criminal Law Section

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

1.5 (0.5 Ethics) MCLE Credits (*Pending*)

Fairfax County Courthouse (Room TBD)

FREE for Criminal Law Section Members

\$52.50 FBA Members/\$75 Non-FBA Members

Distinguished Speakers:

Rachel Countryman, BSN, RN, NYSAFE, SANE-A, SANE-P,

Countryman Consulting, LLC

Ryan Rambudhan, Esq., *S&R Law Firm*

16TH ANNUAL HEROES vs. VILLAINS 5K & KIDS FUN RUN

SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2026

KIDS FUN RUN - 8:00 AM

MAIN RACE - 8:30 AM

Fairfax Corner Shopping Center

4100 Monument Corner Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030

2026 ANNUAL DUI CLE

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026

3:30 PM - 7:30 PM

4.0 (1.0 Ethics) MCLE Credits (*Pending*)

Fairfax County Courthouse (Room TBD)

\$140 FBA Members/\$200 Non-Members

FAMILY LAW SECTION 2026 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE CLE

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026

12:30 pm - 1:30 PM

1.0 MCLE Credit (*Pending*)

Cisco WebEx

FREE for Family Law Section Members

\$36 FBA Members/\$50 Non-Members

Distinguished Speakers:

Kristen L. Kugel, Esq., *Cooper Ginsberg Gray, PLLC*

Carly M. Anderson, Esq., *Cooper Ginsberg Gray, PLLC*

24th ANNUAL LAW DAY WEINER ROAST

FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026

4:30 PM - 8:30 PM *Rain or Shine!*

Weiner, Spivey & Miller, PLC

10605 Judicial Drive, Suite B6, Fairfax, VA 22030

The Law Day Weiner Roast

Established in 2009, it is a joyous, fun-filled fundraiser for the benefit of the *Fairfax Law Foundation (FLF)*. The Weiner Roast features the Honor Guard presenting colors; musical performances by the 20-piece George Mason University Jazz Ensemble; and performers from the award-winning Boyle School of Irish Dance. Highlights also include an old fashioned shoe shine stand, root beer floats, cotton candy, and, of course, lots of weiners.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS IN NEED: LEARNING HOW TO HELP CLE

Presented by the Northern Virginia Pro Bono Law Center

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

3.0 MCLE Credits (*Approved*)

Live Webinar

FREE in exchange for participation in 3 client intake sessions in the coming year and representation for those clients, as possible, in conjunction with Legal Services of Northern Virginia.

Speakers:

Hon. Michael Lindner (Ret.), *Judge, Fairfax General District Court*

Connell Loftus, Esq., *Harris Loftus PLLC*

Edgar Gonzalez, Esq., *Legal Services of Northern Virginia*

26TH ANNUAL SPRING GOLF TOURNAMENT

MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026

12:00 PM - REGISTRATION

12:15 PM - 1:00 PM - PUTTING CONTEST

1:30 PM - SHOTGUN START

Westfields Golf Club,

13940 Balmoral Greens, Ave., Clifton, VA 20124

PARALEGAL SECTION SPRING BOWLING SOCIAL

Hosted by the FBA Paralegal Section

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Lucky Strike Centreville, 13814 Lee Highway, Centreville, VA 20120

\$35 per person/\$195 for a team of six. Includes two hours of bowling, shoe rental, pizza, boneless wings, fries, and soft drinks.

If you are unable to fill a team, we will place you on a team!

Friends, family, and colleagues are invited and encouraged to attend! Prizes will be given to the highest scoring team and the highest male and female scores.

YOU CAN HANDLE THE TRUTH:

DEVELOPING ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY AT LAW FIRMS CLE

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

2.0 (2.0 Ethics) MCLE Credits (*Pending*)

Fairfax County Courthouse, (Room TBD)

\$70 FBA Members/\$100 Non-Members.

Distinguished Speaker:

Nino Greene, *Zebra Communications, LLC*

SAVE THE DATE!

TRIAL PREPARATION FOR BEGINNERS CLE

THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2026

JUDICIAL FEEDBACK PROGRAM

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All communications between an attorney and the Ombudsman, written and/or verbal, throughout the process are held in the strictest confidence, and at no time will the identity of the attorney be disclosed by the Ombudsman to anyone. The overarching role of the Ombudsman is to protect the anonymity of the attorney providing the feedback, including the presentation of the substance of the feedback to a Judge's Facilitator in a manner which shields the identity of the reporter.

No records are maintained as part of this program. Feedback forms presented to the Judge's Facilitator are destroyed by all participants in the process as soon as possible after presentation to the judge. Feedback forms rejected by the Ombudsman as inappropriate are also destroyed.

The Judicial Feedback Program is, and historically has been, widely embraced by the members of the Judiciary of the 19th Judicial Circuit as a mechanism to gain insight into how they can improve the manners in which they conduct themselves and how they run their courtrooms. The Judicial Feedback Program also provides a vehicle to compliment a judge or recognize positive actions and/or attributes of a judge. For this reason, attorneys should be as quick to provide positive feedback through this program to the judges who they appear before as they are to provide negative feedback. The judicial system is only as good as the sum of its parts, and the Judicial Feedback Program provides a prompt, personalized, and confidential method for attorneys to assist our judges in providing respected and trusted service to our communities.

Beth Bittel, Bethabittel.esq@gmail.com, currently serves as the Ombudsman for the Fairfax County Circuit Court after having been involved in the FBA Circuit Court Judicial Feedback Program for many years. ■

OFFICES FOR SALE OR LEASE

Several sizes of private offices & small suites close to FFX Courthouse. Parking is included plus shared amenities, full service leases, 1-year minimum lease term:

- **4015 Chain Bridge Rd.** - Windowed private offices **FOR LEASE:**
 - **Suite 38** - \$1,600/mo, Full Service 3-room suite on upper level
 - **Suite D** - \$750/mo, Full Service office on main level w/ shared waiting area & conf. room.
 - **Suite 31** - \$1,600/mo, Full Service, upper level front facing Chain Bridge Rd. 3-room suite w/2 corner offices & admin. area/waiting room in the middle.
- **4023 Chain Bridge Rd.** - Large windowed private office w/its own full BA, elegant finishes, and parking. **FOR LEASE:**
 - **Suite 5** - \$900/mo, full service - partially furnished corner private office with windows. Avail. 7/1/26

3977 Chain Bridge Road - Private offices available in the historic Ford Building in the heart of Fairfax next to The Auld Shebeen and close to FFX Courthouse.

- **Suite 202** - \$1,800/mo, full service - 3 windowed prvt. offices w/ their own admin/recep. area, plus shared waiting room, kitchen & common area restrooms.

FOR LEASE at Fairfax Plaza Office Park - 9522-B Route 29 Hwy. - 1,200 SF with six offices, conf./waiting room, kitchenette, BA, & plenty of storage. Ample parking. **LEASE - \$2,000/mo + elec., cleaning, phone & internet. Avail. immed. (also listed For Sale).**

10640 Page Ave., Suite 230 - 1,997 SF suite on 2nd floor of elevated office building with great windowline and plenty of parking. Space has 6 offices, conf. room, admin/waiting area, eat-in kitchen/breakroom, and storage closet. **LEASE - \$23.50/psf, Full Service. Avail. 8/1**

4103 Chain Bridge Road - Location! Flexible office suite sizes! Elevated office building w/plenty parking across from Fairfax Courthouse! **LEASE - \$23 PSF, full service.**

- **Suite 400** - 1,800 - 4,400 rsf on 4th floor w/lrg. open admin/recep. area, 2 huge conf. rooms, several prvt. windowed offices, and kit/breakroom.

4085 Chain Bridge Road - Great location & visibility!

Located across from FFX Courthouse in elevated office building. Plenty free unassigned surface parking & uniform exterior signage allowed.

- **Suite G-1** - 600 rsf - Small suite walk-in level/ground floor is divided into 3 rooms w/window looking out to covered parking area. **LEASE - \$950/mo, full service, 1-yr. min. lease term**

4021 University Dr., 2nd Floor - 1,325 SF- Convenient space on 2nd floor at the corner of University Dr. & Sager Ave w/two separate entrances. Space has private corner office, huge open work space/conf. area plus shared 1st floor conf. rm, storage areas, 2 BAs, and kitchenette. **LEASE - \$22/psf + phone/internet & cleaning.**

FOR SALE at Fairfax Plaza Office Park - 9522-B Route 29 Hwy. - 1,200 SF with six offices, conf./waiting room, kitchenette, BA, & plenty of storage. Ample parking. **FOR SALE - \$279,000**

FOR SALE at Old Lee Plaza - 3863 Plaza Dr. - 1,859 SF - Overlooking Blenheim Blvd., upper lvl. end/corner unit w/great window-line for plenty of natural light! Efficient floor plan w/7 windowed offices, 2 conf. rms, waiting/recep. area w/built-in recep. desk, admin area, kit, 2 BAs, util. rm, and storage. Plenty parking & uniform exterior signage allowed. Some existing furniture avail. to convey w/sale of unit at no extra charge. **FOR SALE - \$418,275**

Call for more details, more listings,
or to schedule a showing:

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FAIRFAX BAR
ASSOCIATION
Serving the Northern Virginia Legal Community

JOURNAL

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24TH ANNUAL
★ ★ ★
LAW DAY
WEINER ROAST
FRIDAY, MAY 1, 2026

4:30 PM-8:30PM
RAIN OR SHINE

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SUITE B6 FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030