

# Supreme Court of Virginia

## Order Establishing the Virginia Access to Justice Commission

Upon consideration of recommendations presented by the Supreme Court of Virginia's Access to Justice Planning Committee dated May 31, 2013, the Court hereby establishes the Virginia Access to Justice Commission.

Establishment of this Commission is consistent with both the Virginia Judiciary's mission to provide an "independent, accessible, responsive forum for the just resolution of disputes" and Vision 3 of the current Strategic Plan for Virginia's Judicial System, adopted in 2009, which states that Virginia's courts will "maintain human dignity and provide effective access to justice for all persons." It is also consistent with Resolution 8, adopted by the Conference of Chief Justices and Conference of State Court Administrators at their 2010 annual meeting, and reaffirmed in 2013 with Resolution 13, supporting the goal that every state have an access to justice commission or comparable body.

### **Mission**

The Virginia Access to Justice Commission shall promote equal access to justice, with particular emphasis on the civil legal needs of Virginia residents.

### **Goals**

The Commission's goals shall include the following:

- Coordinate access to justice activities in Virginia
- Actively engage the Supreme Court of Virginia, together with Virginia's judiciary at all levels throughout the Commonwealth, in enhancing equal access to justice
- Identify barriers to obtaining needed legal services, and develop solutions
- Mobilize legal professionals in closing the justice gap by:
  - Increasing awareness of the importance of access to justice and the legal community's obligation to help provide it
  - Promoting universal participation among the legal community in providing pro bono publico services, particularly for low income individuals, and transforming legal culture/expectations about doing so
  - Engaging Virginia's law schools in access to justice issues to inculcate a culture of pro bono service among Virginia's newest lawyers while harnessing their time, talents and energy as a part of their formal legal education to assist in the effort of closing the justice gap for Virginia's underserved
- Encourage development of auxiliary resources (such as low-literacy legal information, simpler court forms, technological aids, etc.) for underserved populations
- Strengthen delivery of civil legal services through Virginia's legal aid societies and other pro bono initiatives and nonprofit legal services entities

## **Membership**

**Appointment:** Commission members shall be appointed by the Chief Justice in consultation with the other members of the Court.

**Number and Representation:** The Commission shall be composed of 17 to 20 individuals, including the following:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Number</b>
Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia	1
Judge of the Court of Appeals of Virginia	1
Circuit Court Judge	1
General District Court Judge	1
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judge	1
Trial Court Clerk	1
Member, Virginia State Bar Access to Legal Services Committee	1
Member, Virginia Bar Association Pro Bono Committee	1
At-large Attorneys	2
Law School Dean, Professor or Instructor	1
Legal Services Corporation of Virginia	1
Legal Aid Organizations	2
Corporate Counsel	1
Statewide Social Services Professional or Client Non-Legal Services Provider	2

Up to three additional at-large members may be appointed at the discretion of the Chief Justice.

**Terms:** Initial appointments shall be for staggered terms of one, two, or three years. Following those initial terms, appointments or reappointments shall be for three-year terms. Any appointment to fill a vacancy occurring before the end of a term shall be for the unexpired term. Any member whose term expires may be allowed to continue to serve until his or her successor is appointed.

A member's position on the Commission may be considered to have been vacated if the member no longer serves in the capacity for which he or she was appointed. However, the Chief Justice shall have discretion to allow the individual to complete his or her full term and may reappoint the individual as an at-large member. All members shall serve at the pleasure of the Chief Justice and shall be eligible for reappointment at the discretion of the Chief Justice.

**Officers:** The Commission shall have two co-chairs, to be designated periodically by the Chief Justice. One of the co-chairs shall be a justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

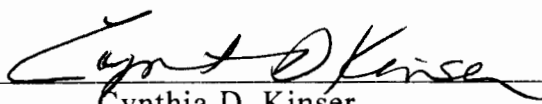
**Organization and Operation**

The co-chairs and inaugural members shall determine initial organizational and operating details consistent with this order. This Commission shall not take any action that is inconsistent with or contrary to any provision of the Code of Virginia, the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, or decided cases. This Commission has no independent authority to implement recommendations.

**Reporting**

During the first two years of its existence, the Commission shall report its progress to the Supreme Court of Virginia on a quarterly basis. Thereafter, such reports shall be made at least annually.

It is so ordered. Given under my hand this 13th day of September, 2013.

  
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Cynthia D. Kinser  
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia