



The Docket

May 2020

Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia

Judicial Emergency Declared, Budget Slashed

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In early March there was news to celebrate: 90 FTE had been approved for FY21, and 30 additional FTE had been approved for FY22. District courts would see 120 new FTE total over the next two fiscal years. Raises for all state employees were on the horizon. It seemed to be great news to beleaguered and suffering court employees. Help was on the way.

Then, Friday, March 13, 2020, arrived, and all of a sudden the coronavirus was a real threat in the U.S. Many courts gathered that weekend with community leaders to discuss what to do. On March 16, 2020, the Chief Justice issued the first Order Declaring a Judicial Emergency. Many courts closed for a few days to figure out how to operate under the provisions of the Order.

The economy took an immediate and sudden downturn once the Governor issued Executive Order 55, effectively closing restaurants and other businesses under a “stay at home” Order. Suddenly, the hope for new positions

and raises for employees was eviscerated. While the positions remain unfunded in the budget beginning July 1, 2020, they are in a category of new funding slated to be “delayed” rather than stricken entirely; however, in this “new world” we are living in, there are too many uncertainties to plan any celebrations just yet.

The timing of all of this is a real tragedy, especially since district courts were already woefully understaffed and will be working under remarkable and unprecedented conditions when the Judicial Emergency ends. As Kristi Wright, director of legislative and public relations for the Supreme Court’s Office of the Executive Secretary, said in a statement, “we hope that when it is time to restore the funding, the essential nature of the services provided by these positions will be recognized and prioritized” (*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 29, 2020).

As of this writing, the Judicial Emergency Order has been extended thrice since entry of the original Order, and is presently set to expire June 7, 2020.

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Special Issues Committee Report: Pay Banding and Court Composition Issues

The Clerk’s Association Special Issues Committee convened a meeting in Virginia Beach on February 13, 2020. Clerks around the state met to discuss many issues impacting all district courts, but the primary reason for meeting was to focus on eliminating current grades in order to move to a pay band classification system, as well as to standardize court composition based on size.

A summary report was issued to the Executive Secretary on March 9, 2020. An excerpt from the document is included to the right:

One common theme evolved in both the workgroup and in other discussions with various Clerks throughout the state: every district court regardless of size, type, geographic location or staffing level has at least one component unique to their court which creates a stressor and limits their success.

Small courts struggle with the coordination of so few staff that the absence of one employee is profoundly felt. Many small courts have difficulty finding employees with

Alexandria GDC: Congratulations to **Hope R. Mayfield**, for her exemplary service with the Alexandria General District Court, from July 1, 1979, until her retirement on March 31, 2020. Clerk, **Marion Jackson**, would like to commend Hope for her service as Supervising Deputy Clerk for the Civil Division since June 2008, and for her positive influence in ensuring that the Courts, Judges, and the public's needs were met. Congratulations and best wishes for a happy retirement, Hope!

Buena Vista CMB: Clerk, **Ginger Webb**, would like to welcome the Hon. Robin J. Mayer to their bench. Judge Mayer replaces Hon. Christopher B. Russell who was elevated to the Circuit Court bench effective April 1, 2020. Congratulations, Judge Russell and welcome Judge Mayer!

Campbell GDC: Clerk, **Chantel Jones**, would like to announce the birth of a beautiful baby girl to **Jenna Hill** on March 16, 2020. Congratulations, Jenna! **Chantel** will celebrate nine years with Campbell GDC on May 10, 2020. Happy anniversary, Chantel!

Chesterfield JDR: The Court would like to congratulate the following staff on anniversaries this year: **Michelle Arrington**, deputy clerk, 25 years; **Barbara Warren**, deputy clerk, 20 years; **Laura Griffin**, Clerk of Court, 15 years; **Carrie Warr**, Supervising Deputy Clerk, 10 years. Congratulations, ladies! Also, Laura Griffin would like to thank **Laura Craig, Clerk of Court, Petersburg JDR**, for helping her office recently so she could conduct full-staff training. Thank you so much, Laura!

Danville JDR: Clerk, **Tammy White**, would like to recognize deputy clerks **Christina Davis, Dana Barber, Lisa Richardson**, and **Ashley Williams** on a job well done! These ladies were to be presented with certificates at this year's canceled Clerk's Association conference. Tammy says about her team, "I'm proud to announce all data entry (filings) received in this clerk's office is very often entered and scheduled for hearing the same date of filing (no longer than 7 days). They work very hard and always exemplify positive attitudes. Our court is considered medium sized but these ladies have been cross-trained in different court proceedings. It has been a very long time since I've personally felt this way about a group of individuals as their supervisor. I'm grateful and appreciate their hard work." Way to go!

Fredericksburg GDC: Clerk, Laura Hatch, has very sad news to share. Melissa Loar passed away after a brave battle with cancer on May 3, 2020. See tribute on page 3.

Henrico JDR: Clerk, **Shannon Meadowcroft**, would like to welcome the Hon. Linda Y. Lambert to their bench, effective May 1, 2020. Welcome, Judge Lambert!

Lexington/Rockbridge GDC: Clerk, **Jacqueline Miller**, would like to welcome **Hannah Hostetter**, who started February 25, 2020. Welcome, Hannah!

Loudoun GDC: Clerk, **Tammy Dintermann**, would like to congratulate **Sarah Millson**, deputy clerk, who celebrated her one year anniversary in January. Sarah also married Christopher, on March 20, 2020. Congratulations, Sarah! Deputy Clerk **Jordan Regalbuto** also celebrated one year with the Court on in April, and will be getting married October 24, 2020. Congratulations, Jordan!

Lynchburg JDR: Clerk, **Victoria Baez**, would like to extend a well-deserved thank you to **Bradley Click** for working so hard to set up all of the WebEx requests and the judges' computers! Thank you, Bradley! Also, Victoria would like to commend and recognize the rest of her team for working so diligently during this pandemic. Finally, sincere condolences are extended to Supervising Deputy Clerk **Brittany Rhodes** on the passing of her father, Rev. Coolidge E. Rhodes, Sr.

Lynchburg GDC: Clerk, **Amy Leftwich**, would like to congratulate **Bonita Johnson** on her retirement April 30, 2020. She served 40 years with the Court. Thank you for your service, Bonnie! You will be missed! Also, welcome to **Amanda Moore** and **Kiala Gutierrez**, who joined their team this month. Amanda will be on the civil team, and Kiala will split her time between both traffic/criminal and the civil teams.

Richmond JDR: Acting Clerk, **Felicia Edmonds-Rustin**, would like to welcome the following new deputy clerks to Richmond JDR: **Chekeen Clark, Teresa Felts, Jamece Turner, Alicia Taylor**, and **Faith Flowers**. Additionally, a huge congratulations to **Diane C. Ickes**, who celebrates 50 years of service to Richmond JDR on May 11, 2020! What an amazing career of service, Diane! The Court would also like to thank the following employees who have transitioned to other courts: **Janell Wilson**, Virginia Beach GDC, and **Whitney Day**, Prince William GDC. Good luck in your new roles, ladies! Finally, the Court announces the departure of their Clerk, **Patricia Batley**, who is relocating to Texas. Congratulations, everyone!



Pictured at left:
Fredericksburg
Circuit and General
District Courthouse

Virginia Beach JDR: On May 4, 2020, Virginia Beach JDR Deputy Clerk **Doreen Cooley** passed away after a hard-fought battle with cancer. Doreen worked for the court for 14 years and was well-liked by everyone. One co-worker described Doreen as a “strong little lady.” She was a very dedicated employee, always coming to work because she didn’t want to burden her co-workers. We are devastated that we lost a co-worker and friend, but know we were blessed to have in our lives.

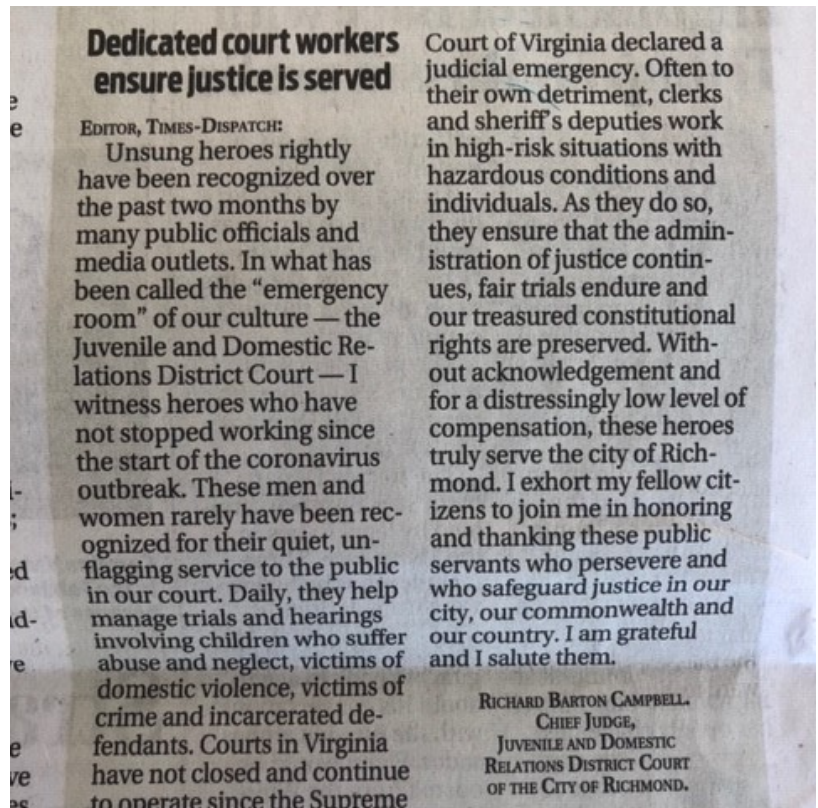


Pictured at left: **Doreen Cooley**, when she first started with the Court.

Waynesboro JDR: Clerk, **Callie Bailey**, would like to welcome **Natalie Sandridge** and **Ashleigh Kester** to the Court. Callie says, “these two have been instrumental in getting through this pandemic and I would like to welcome them and recognized them for all their hard work!”

Williamsburg JDR: Clerk, **Shea Bruno**, would like to congratulate **Stephanie Barber** on five years of service. Congratulations, Stephanie!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to all of our very essential colleagues who have persevered during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are so proud to work alongside you. YOU are the Judicial Branch. Thank you for your service to the Commonwealth.



Editorial by the **Hon. Richard B. Campbell**, Richmond JDR District Court, published in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 9, 2020.

Pictured at right: Oliver Hill Courts Building, Richmond JDR District Court, named after famed civil rights attorney, Oliver White Hill, Sr. (May 1, 1907-August 5, 2007)



Memorial Tribute, **Melissa Parr Loar, Fredericksburg GDC**



Melissa Parr Loar , Deputy Clerk, Fredericksburg GDC

March 17, 1962–May 03, 2020

Melissa worked in various state agencies over the years, such as RAASAP Fredericksburg, Rappahannock Regional Jail and Fredericksburg General District Court. Melissa began her career as a Deputy Clerk on April 25, 2017.

Sadly, Melissa lost her battle with lung cancer on the evening of May 3, 2020. Lovingly known as Nawnee, Mess, and Lissa, she loved hearts, owls, and all things purple, and adored her family and friends. She was a hard worker, was great with numbers, appreciated silly jokes, margarita night with friends and always had a warm and caring spirit. She will be very dearly missed.

Special Recognition Resolution—Dorothy Hamlet

WHEREAS, The Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia considers from time to time to recognize and pay tribute for faithful and personal contributions to the Judicial System, and

WHEREAS, Dorothy Hamlet began her career on April 1, 1977 as Deputy Clerk, Appomattox General District Court and was subsequently promoted to Clerk, and

WHEREAS, Dorothy Hamlet continued her Judicial System career until her first retirement on December 31, 2007, and

WHEREAS, Dorothy Hamlet after retirement, subsequently has served as a Wage Employee in Appomattox, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, and Prince Edward County Clerk's Offices, and

WHEREAS, Dorothy Hamlet has undertaken significant responsibilities of assisting the Tenth Judicial District in all aspects of court management,

THEREFORE, BE IT KNOWN that Dorothy Hamlet is specially recognized by the Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia and that all are grateful for her continued service at 82-years-old, and

BE IT RESOLVED that this Special Recognition be read at the annual meeting of the Association, a copy be incorporated in the minutes of the Association, a copy be published in the next issue of *The Docket*, and a copy be presented to Dorothy Hamlet.

ADOPTED: January 24, 2020

Our bylaws indicate that we will publish any resolutions in *The Docket*. This month we are sharing a special resolution that was recently adopted.



Pictured above: **Dorothy Hamlet**

Picture credit: **Jeannie Hamlet**, Clerk of Court, Appomattox GDC

Clerks Association mourns passing of beloved member, Beneatha Simmons

Beneatha B. Simmons, former Clerk of Petersburg J&DR District Court, and most recently, Colonial Heights General District Court, lost her battle with cancer on February 17, 2020. Upon her retirement last December, Clerks Association officers and other Chesterfield and Colonial Heights court employees presented Beneatha with a plaque and Resolution recognizing her many achievements. The Resolution was printed in the last issue of *The Docket*. At her funeral, Association President Rick Kahl delivered a eulogy on behalf of the Clerks Association. Several Clerks of Court and district court employees were in attendance at the beautiful service honoring a life well-lived. Beneatha's full obituary can be found [online](#). Beneatha's contributions to the Clerks Association were many, but her warm smile and sense of humor will be missed most of all.



Special Issues Committee Report: Pay Banding and Court Composition Issues, *cont.*

the abilities and skills we require to be successful on the job. These employees must be able to retain a vast amount of knowledge, without the constant repetition found in larger courts. This is particularly emphasized in Combined courts and compounded throughout the state since over 100 courts fall into the small court category.

Equally significant, Virginia's 30 large and extra-large courts have difficulty finding employees with the ability and skillsets to accomplish single-scoped and redundant case processing, while serving an immense customer base. Coupled with the stressors of volume and the inherent intensities of managing large caseloads, numerous court requirements, and multiple personnel issues, large courts often have additional stressors levied upon them by their localities due to the large local budgets and physical plants they are managing.

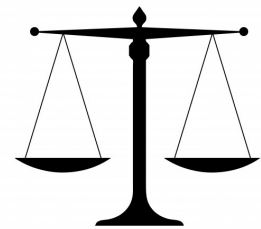
Medium sized courts are not isolated from any of these issues, instead, they generally face the dilemmas identified in both small and large courts, on a larger or smaller scale.

In sum, Virginia's district courts still have a lot to learn about each other and the various issues all sizes of courts face; however, one thing remains the same: the level of service delivery, access to justice, and due process afforded every Virginian must be the same in every court, regardless of size or location.

Due to COVID-19, there has been no further discussion regarding the workgroup's findings. While disappointing, we understand that we are operating in unprecedented times, and have received acknowledgment from the Executive Secretary that once things return to "normal," we will be able to turn our attention to this important issue in due time.



Pictured above: Virginia Beach JDR Courthouse



Special thanks to Amy Burnham and Virginia Beach JDR District Court for hosting our meeting in February.

Hand sanitizer, Masks, PPE, and District Courts

In an email received from Karl Hade on Monday, May 11, 2020, courts needing hand sanitizer should reach out to their [local Emergency Management Offices](#) to ask them for assistance. Just this week, The Supply Room Company once again has Purell hand sanitizer back in stock and several district courts have received deliveries.

In the same email communication, OES announced an expected shipment of cloth masks for all judicial branch employees on May 12, 2020. Your office should be receiving them soon. Note: you will only receive masks for the number of employees the HR department has on record for your office.

Please reach out to your locality, who should be receiving stock from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, if you are unable to otherwise obtain masks/PPE.

SPOTLIGHT ON DISTRICT COURTS:

Essential Employees: *District Courts in the Time of Coronavirus*

From Vickie L. King, Clerk of Court, Highland County Combined District Court:

Business as usual. Said no court clerk ever! Our business is never usual, in fact it often borders on bizarre. Being from one of the smallest, most rural courts in the Commonwealth, I cannot imagine what my sister clerks are dealing with. Just continually continuing cases is enough to drive you over the edge!

So, the entire Commonwealth is under a "stay-at-home" order, yet without holding court I need an arraignment for the defendant that has violated his protective order. A warrant for trespassing, really?! Yes, ma'am, this office did send you notice that your traffic case had been continued yet again. Yes, that is the address it was mailed to and no, it was not returned as undeliverable. Extradition?! Surely you jest!

So, hats, (or masks), off to you Honorable Clerk! Once again you have risen above and beyond to coordinate the service of justice while navigating uncharted waters. Yet still managing to assist the public, attorneys, law enforcement and fellow clerks in the process. I have been the recipient of your graciousness and I am so thankful that we clerks are in this together.

Keep smiling, (even if it is through gritted teeth!), Vickie

From Laura S. Morgan, Clerk of Court, Westmoreland Combined District Court:

Things in Westmoreland have been crazy busy! What a time and month or so this has been... When we received the news of the judicial emergency, it was a Monday afternoon. Like many

of you, we had court the very next morning. We had 283 cases on that next docket. How do you prepare for that? *You can't (very well)*. The next morning, we had our sheriff's office out front directing traffic and separating people throughout all the waiting rooms and letting people come to our office to sign for the new date (one at a time). We got through it but what an experience! Our next court date was a little smaller and thankfully we had a little more time to contact all parties to reschedule. By the 3rd or 4th docket that we had to continue hundreds of cases for, we felt like pros! We, like many of you, have spent the last few weeks contacting plaintiffs and defendants of new dates, calling multiple attorneys, defendants, the commonwealth attorneys, sending out notices, sending and answering a million emails, etc... I believe the most interesting and frustrating part of this experience while we have been doing all of this "behind the scene" kind of work is how many times we have been asked if we are bored! It has amazed me just how many people don't have a clue what we do or what it takes to make the court run smoothly. Things have been better in the last week or two here in Westmoreland. We seem to be finding our groove but I do worry about what court will look like when the state is opened back up. This month, it is hard to imagine... So far, we are healthy here and pray for that to continue. Be safe and hopefully this will all be behind us soon.

From Cheryl L. DeVaughn, Clerk of Court, Hanover General District Court

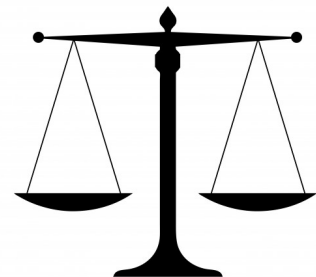
During the COVID-19 Declaration of Judicial Emergency we have used our time wisely.

The staff has increased our knowledge and awareness by completing over 110 hours of LinkedIn Learning classes. We have had multiple Team Building and In-Service Training. In addition, we have been fortunate to take an "unusual" 15 minute break in the afternoon to take care of our mental health by walking and stretching.

However, we are tired of continuing hundreds of cases and answering the question, "when are you going to be open?"

From Ginger L. Webb, Clerk of Court, Buena Vista Combined District Court

COVID-19 has been a challenge that so far we have survived. The question now is, how will we survive the start up of our "new normal"? Will that be the bigger challenge? Let us get through it together!



Clerks Recognition Program, 2020 Award Recipients

Due to the cancellation of the Annual Clerks Association Conference and Meeting, we were unable to present plaques and certificates to our winners publicly this year. Clerks Association President, Rick Kahl, reached out to all of this year's winners to extend our hearty congratulations; however, we know it is not the same, and we do plan to make room on our agenda next year (fingers crossed!) so that we can reflect on these wonderful achievements as a group.

Deputy Clerk of the Year: Maricel Landicho, Colonial Heights GDC

Supervising Deputy Clerk of the Year: Diane Ickes, Richmond JDR

Clerk of the Year: Kristie Daily, Caroline JDR

Team of the Year: Danville JDR

Recognition for Exceptional Leadership: Laura Hatch, Fredericksburg GDC, and David O'Dell, Virginia Beach GDC

Special Resolution: Dorothy Hamlet



Maricel Landicho



Diane Ickes



Kristie Daily



Serving Virginia's District Courts since 1962.

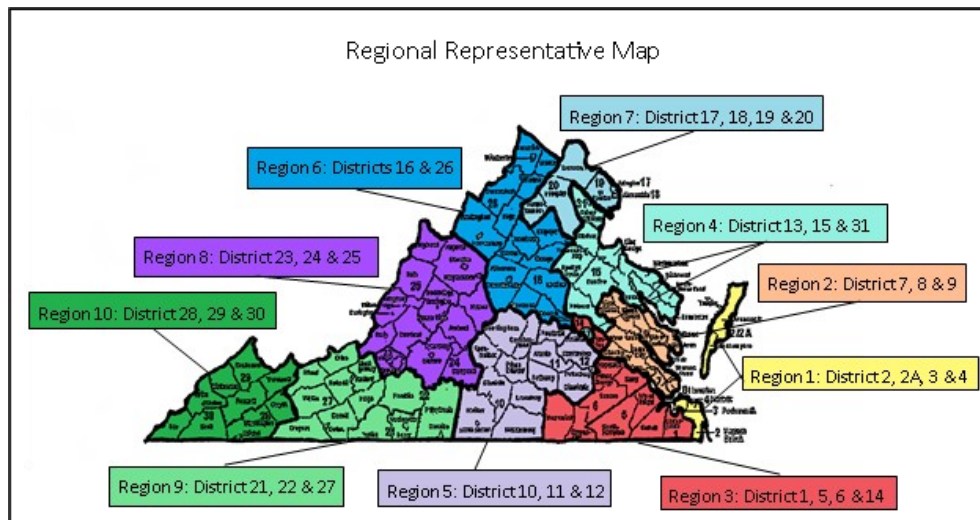
Committee Chairs

Budget & Finance	Debra Hill
CATS Manual	Barbara Shaw
Historian	Stephanie Swift
Legislative	Barbara Shaw & Ginger Webb
Membership	Laura Griffin
Mentorship	Terri Rea
Nominating	Terri Rea
Parliamentarian	Christina Davis
Programs	Lindsey Short & Lauren Jones
Publications	Laura Griffin
Resolutions	Dean Sprague
Special Issues	Amy Burnham & Terri Rea
Technology	Laura Griffin
Ways & Means	Lauren Jones

Clerks Association Mission

- ◆ *To foster a closer relationship among the district courts of Virginia*
- ◆ *To improve proficiency and professionalism of court personnel*
- ◆ *To promote uniformity of procedure*
- ◆ *To recommend improved techniques and procedures to more efficiently perform the duties of the Clerk's Office*
- ◆ *To provide educational and training opportunities for all district court employees*
- ◆ *To foster cooperation and understanding between court personnel, judges, the legal community, and others involved with or interested in courts*

Please visit our webpage at www.vadistrictclerks.com



For News and Current Events, please see our website. If you have interest in joining any of our committees, please contact your Regional Representative! Our organization is entirely volunteer-led and requires the participation of any district court employee! Please consider lending your time to your Association!

