



# The Docket

November 2019

## Clerks Association Leadership

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President	Rick Kahl
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Past President	Terri Rea
Vice President	Kimberly McKittrick
Secretary/Treas.	Debra Hill

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Region 9	Nikki King
Region 10	Kathy Vance

## Association of Clerks of the District Courts of Virginia

### Karl Hade presents district court staffing plight to the House Appropriations Committee

On October 21, 2019, Karl R. Hade, Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia, met with the House Appropriations Committee regarding the district court staffing crisis. Mr. Hade apprised the Committee that understaffing has an impact on “the public’s perception of the court system, our customer service, as well as our operations, and in some cases, the health and well-being of our staff.”

In order to cogently explain the staffing shortages we are facing, Mr. Hade first described the staffing model our branch of government uses to determine the appropriate number of staff required to perform the work of each district court. “We acknowledge both for judge-

ships and clerks [just using raw data] was not the way to go about this. We worked with the National Center for State Courts to come up with what’s called a weighted model, and what that does is recognize that it takes longer for some cases to be processed than others.”

#### Staffing Model

The District Court Staffing Model Workgroup has been meeting with Judicial Planning and Judicial Services to discuss the limitations of the current weighted caseload model. Under the current staffing model, district courts are understaffed by 276 positions; however, re-aligning the model to remove daily case processing duties from management would suggest there is an even greater staff need.

“When you are understaffed, everyone suffers, the judges, clerks, lawyers, officers and of course the public. Every single person is not given the attention that is required. The entire reputation of the court becomes tainted.” -Clerk of Court

In a “perfect world scenario,” Clerks of Court would spend 100% of their time “Clerking,” supervisors would be supervising 100% of the time, and deputy clerks would be processing cases 100% of the time; however, real life dictates that this can never occur because of staff turnover, short- and long-term leave, and unexpected absences from work when management has to step in and perform case processing as well. Notwithstanding, if we

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## Supreme Court warns public about telephone scam

The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia is advising the public to be on alert for a phone scam that fakes or spoofs the name and telephone number of a Virginia court on the recipient's voicemail and/or caller ID.

Callers claim to be representatives of a Virginia court, inquiring about the location of individuals, or demanding monies or personal information such as social security numbers or credit card numbers.

OES has placed a warning

on the Virginia Court System's public website to alert the public about this scam.

**Your court may want to post this information at your front counter or on your local court website.**



## Karl Hade, Continued from page 2



Virginia's Capitol

build a model with these factors in mind, we can better prepare for these issues.

In addition to separating case processing from management duties, an updated model would also factor in other variables previously not considered by the weighted caseload model, such as additional judgeships, legislative changes, and technology developments.

Cyril Miller, Jr., Ph.D., Director of Judicial Planning, stated, "Judicial Planning, Judicial Services, and all of OES could not maintain this model without the workgroup's indispensable efforts at keeping it relevant and up-

dated." The staffing model workgroup was tasked last spring and summer with providing the valuable feedback Mr. Hade included in his presentation from clerks in the field regarding the impacts of understaffing.

### Mental/Physical Stress & Secondary Trauma

The surveys administered over the summer yielded over 200 responses. The word "stress" appeared 379 times. Regarding courtroom staff, Mr. Hade told the Committee, "They're listening to some pretty horrific stories about things that happened to the youth in our Commonwealth; and, it's difficult to listen to that and then go home."

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## News from around the State

**Augusta GDC:** Congratulations to the following employees on these amazing career milestones: **Karen Dabney**, deputy clerk, celebrated 15 years on February 10th; **Linda Clark**, deputy clerk, will be celebrating 15 years on November 15th; and, **Christy Hostetter**, Clerk, celebrated 20 years on November 1st. Congratulations, ladies!

**Chesterfield GDC:** Clerk Linda Moore would like to congratulate the following employees on career service milestones in 2019: **Brenda Felts**, 20 years; **Wanda Barron**, 30 years; **Tina Walls**, 20 years; **Debbie Vachet**, 25 years; and **Lisa Trent**, 25 years. Congratulations, ladies!

**Chesterfield JDR:** Clerk Laura Griffin would like to welcome **Jazmin Fields** to the court. Additionally, congratulations to the soon-to-be **Carrie Warr**, who will be married November 30th.

**Hanover GDC:** Clerk Cheryl DeVaughn would like to give a big welcome to her new civil team, **Katie Martin**, **Melissa Bagwell**, and **Kimberly Miller**. Additionally, she welcomes **Carisa Studer** to the warrant team. Cheryl also wants to send a shout out to those deputy clerks in her office who have pushed through this rough year (Cheryl lost more than half of her staff within a few months, and it put a heavy load on those who stayed the course). Thank you for your dedication! Cheryl also wishes to recognize the following service milestones in her court: **Denise Carroll**, 32 years; **Sarah Hall**, 7 years; **Caroline Hinkle**, 3 years; **Christie Hoare**, 5 years; **Brooke Reed**, 2 years; and, **Ellen McGehee**, 21 years. Finally, Cheryl wishes to recognize the generous support from the staff at **Fredericksburg GDC** and the perseverance of her loyal staff. She is happy to

report her "team is full, with enthusiastic new members and positivity from our trained staff!"

**King William & King & Queen GDC:** Clerk Jill Hall congratulates deputy clerk Emily Hundley on her first child, John Colton, born September 18th. Congratulations, Emily!

**Loudoun JDR:** Clerk Evamari Bates would like to welcome the following new employees: **Shavon Phinizy**, **Nina Disantis**, **Katey Dunn** and **Alisa Decantur**. She is very pleased to have them!

**Lynchburg GDC:** Clerk Amy Leftwich would like to welcome **Meagan Irving** to their office. Meagan started August 25th. Welcome, Meagan!

**New Kent JDR:** Clerk Kelly Douglas Wiggins welcomes **Lisa Miller** as a wage employee. Welcome, Lisa!

**Newport News JDR:** Clerk Pasty Ewell shared several fun events from the past month! In October, the Clerk's Office held a Chili Cook Off and wore their favorite sport teams' shirts/jerseys.



Five different chili entries were judged by their Judges, attorneys, CSU staff, and their Sheriff's Department. **Ryan Crisp**, deputy clerk, won 1st place; second runner up was

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## News from around the State, Continued from page 2



**Brett Hudson**; 3rd place went to **Tre Moses**. The staff at Newport News JDR also dressed up for Halloween and held an appreciation event for their courtroom bailiffs and deputies—they named it “Deputy Day!” It was a very special way to recognize all they do to keep them safe. These events lifted morale and

encouraged teamwork. See the Association website for more pictures from their event!

**Patrick JDR**: Clerk Michele Bryant would like to welcome **Renee Collins** as a new deputy clerk. Welcome, Renee!

**Petersburg JDR**: Clerk Laura Craig would like to welcome

new employee, **Hayden Coppridge**. The Court is very excited to have her join their team. She would also like to congratulate **Lamar Crockett**, who celebrates 5 years of service.

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## Getting to know your President, Rick Kahl

**Editor**: How long have you been Clerk in Roanoke GDC, and what is your favorite part of being a court administrator?

**Rick**: I started on January 1st, 2012, nearly 8 years ago. Each day is different and usually presents some challenge that is unexpected or uniquely different. Having a great staff makes the day enjoyable and is the recipe for getting through each day successfully.

**Editor**: What did you do before joining the Judicial branch?

**Rick**: I was in law enforcement for 30 years. I retired as a captain from the Roanoke City Police Department in December 2011, a month before coming to Roanoke City General District Court.

**Editor**: What has been the most rewarding part of your service to the Clerks Association?

**Rick**: The Association allows me the opportunity to meet and network with so

many court administrators and employees from around the state. I value the many friendships that has developed from my connection with the Association.

**Editor**: Why would you urge a district court employee to serve in the Association?

**Rick**: The Association has come a long way over the years. It serves as a voice for all District Court Clerk's offices. We recognize that everyone is very busy, but we also have to realize there are important issues that affect the Clerk's offices that need to be highlighted and fixed. This requires feedback, input, and involvement from everyone, since we're all in it together. As one voice, we can work with OES and our legislators to address and resolve, or at least improve deficiencies that affect us all. I would encourage anyone that has great ideas and a passion to solve problems, to join the Association.

**Editor**: What would you like the Association's legacy to be?

**Rick**: To be recognized as a powerful voice in the District Court system and viewed as an organization that serves in the "best interest" of the nearly 1,600 court employees working in 192 district courts, throughout the Commonwealth.

**Editor**: If you were a legislator for a day, what would you "fix" about the judicial system (court procedure/process or something else)?

**Rick**: I would immediately address the understaffing positions within the court system. This situation has been described as "a crisis." Expecting a Clerk's office to operate efficiently, that is understaffed is unrealistic and unacceptable. Losing talented employees as a result is difficult to accept, but more challenging to replace. There are many more issues I would "fix", but the understaffing crisis is what I would address first.

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*"We recognize that everyone is very busy, but we also have to realize there are important issues that affect the Clerk's offices that need to be highlighted and fixed. This requires feedback, input and involvement from everyone, since we're all in it together. As one voice, we can work with OES and our legislators to address and resolve, or at least improve deficiencies that affect us all."*

- **Rick Kahl**,  
**President**



Rick Kahl, Clerk of Court, Roanoke City General District Court

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## Getting to know your President, Rick Kahl, Continued from page 3



The Roanoke Star was constructed in 1949, and is placed at the top of Mill Mountain in Roanoke, VA.

*The Judicial Learning Center exhibits provide an overview of Virginia's judicial system, the rich history of Virginia's judiciary, and its contributions to the development of America's legal system.*



Karl R. Hade, Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia

**Editor:** What is one piece of advice you would offer to every new court employee?

**Rick:** There is so much to learn, but it takes time. Don't be afraid to ask questions. At some point, everything will start to make sense and come together.

**Editor:** When do you think you'll know it's time to retire, and how do you plan on spending it?

**Rick:** I enjoy what I do and greatly appreciate the opportunity working for the court system. I started preparing for retirement well before I started with the court system, 8 years ago. I have a plan in place and haven't deviated from it. When that time arrives, I would like to get involved with a few non-profit organizations, travel abroad, and spend time with future grandchildren.

## Supreme Court unveils Judicial Learning Center

On September 12, 2019, the Supreme Court of Virginia announced the opening of the Judicial Learning Center, located in the Supreme Court of Virginia building at 100 North Ninth Street, Richmond. The Supreme Court of Virginia Judicial Learning Center promotes public understanding of the rule of law and appreciation for the structure and function of the judicial branch of government in the Commonwealth. Judicial Learning Center exhibits provide an overview of

Virginia's judicial system, the rich history of Virginia's judiciary, and its contributions to the development of America's legal system. Visitors may view an interactive portrait collection of the Justices of the Supreme Court of Virginia, photographs highlighting significant civil rights cases and Virginia's "Judicial Trailblazers," and listen to oral history interviews about landmark cases and advancements. The Learning Center is designed to address Virginia Standards of Learning

curricula for both elementary and high school students. The Supreme Court of Virginia Judicial Learning Center is financially assisted by a generous grant from the Virginia Law Foundation. Through philanthropy, the Virginia Law Foundation promotes the rule of law, access to justice, and law-related education. Tours of the Supreme Court of Virginia Learning Center can be arranged with advance notice by contacting the Virginia State Law Library. More information is available at [www.scvahistory.org](http://www.scvahistory.org).

## Karl Hade, Continued from page 2

Mr. Hade stated, "We received 206 responses totaling over 400 pages. I read every single one of those pages and I felt like I needed some therapy afterwards. It was very, very tough to get

through." Long hours, working weekends, unused leave – all of these issues were explained to the legislators.

### A Call to Action

Mr. Hade stated,

"...increasingly, it's becoming more difficult for us to provide services to the citizens in the way we would like." He also explained how adding new judgeships put pressure on our already be-

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## Is your court receiving a local salary supplement?

The Clerks Association continues to track those district courts who are receiving a local salary supplement. If your court is receiving a salary supplement and is not listed in the chart at the right, please contact Laura Griffin with your information. Thank you!

Locality & Level(s) of Court	Current Annual Dollar Amount or Percentage
Alexandria JDR and General District Court	15%
Arlington JDR and General District Court	15%
Botetourt Combined District Court	\$3,000 per employee
Buena Vista Combined District Court	\$3,800 for office, split amongst 2 employees
Carroll General District Court	\$8,000 for office, split amongst 5 employees
Dickenson Combined District Court	\$9,000 for office, split amongst 3 employees
Fairfax City General District Court	15%
Fairfax County JDR and General District Court	15%
Falls Church Combined District Court	15%
Giles JDR and General District Court	\$3,000 per employee
Henrico General District Court	\$4,000 per employee
Isle of Wight JDR and General District Court	2%
King George Combined District Court	2%
Loudoun JDR and General District Court	10%
Roanoke City JDR and General District Court	\$3,000 per employee
Roanoke County JDR and General District Court	\$3,000 per employee
Salem Combined District Court	\$3,000 per employee
Stafford JDR and General District Court	15%
Virginia Beach JDR and General District Court	5% for employees earning under \$35,000; 3% for employees earning \$35,000 to \$39,999; 1% for employees earning \$40,000 and higher
Washington County General District Court	\$16,500 for office, split amongst 6 employees

As of 10/2/19

## Karl Hade, Continued from page 4

leaguered system. Alarming-ly, 52 courts are operating at or below 80% of where they should be.

Of 192 total district courts, 131 are considered understaffed, 57 are fully staffed, and four are overstaffed. Mr. Hade explained that in the overstaffed courts, “the Committee on District Courts, which is made up of members of the General Assembly and judges, is charged with allocating positions throughout the court system; ....[we got their permission] that when a position becomes available in an overstaffed court, we are reallocating that position to an understaffed court.”

The top five understaffed courts in the Commonwealth are Fairfax County GDC (21.9 positions), Prince William GDC (15.5 positions), Chesapeake GDC (12.8 positions), Chesterfield GDC (11.8 positions), and Henri-

co GDC (11.0 positions).

The presentation seemed well received by the delegates, but drew some questions regarding other ways to manage the workload (such as offering prepayment discounts for traffic infractions, and creating “regional courts” that could offer help to the most understaffed courts in each geographical region).

“We’re not asking for all 276; we know that’s not possible. But we were hoping we could start taking some incremental steps to addressing this issue.”

*Please see our website for the complete slide deck of the presentation, the link to the video of Mr. Hade’s presentation (starts at 10:05 mark), and the additional appendix of information given to the House Appropriations Committee.*

*“We received 206 responses totaling over 400 pages. I read every single one of those pages and I felt like I needed some therapy afterwards. It was very, very tough to get through.”*

**- Karl Hade, Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia**



## News from around the State, Continued from page 3

**Pulaski JDR:** Clerk Anne Helms would like to congratulate **Lori Carpenter**, who has been with the court system for 19 years effective October 10th. Congratulations, Lori!

**Richmond JDR:** Clerk Trisha Batley would like to extend congratulations to the following employees on service milestones this year: **Emily Roberts**, 15 years; and, **Tina Hunter**, 20 years. Congratulations!

**Warren JDR:** The Court would like to congratulate deputy clerk Jessica Swecker, now **Jessica Smoot**, who was married September 7th. Congratulations, Jessica. Also, congratulations to Clerk Shanna Henry on the birth of her second grandchild, Jacob Emerson Poe.

**York/Poquoson JDR:** Clerk Margienette Whitfield extends hearty congratulations to **Lisa Miller**, deputy clerk, who retired July 1st. York JDR also welcomes **Udana Galbreath** as a deputy clerk. Welcome, Udana!



**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	<b>VACANCY*</b>
Nomination	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

\*If you are interested in chairing the Mentorship Committee, please contact Rick Kahl.

***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](http://www.vadistrictclerks.com)

**Save the Date—  
Clerks Association  
Annual Conference &  
Meeting, 2020**

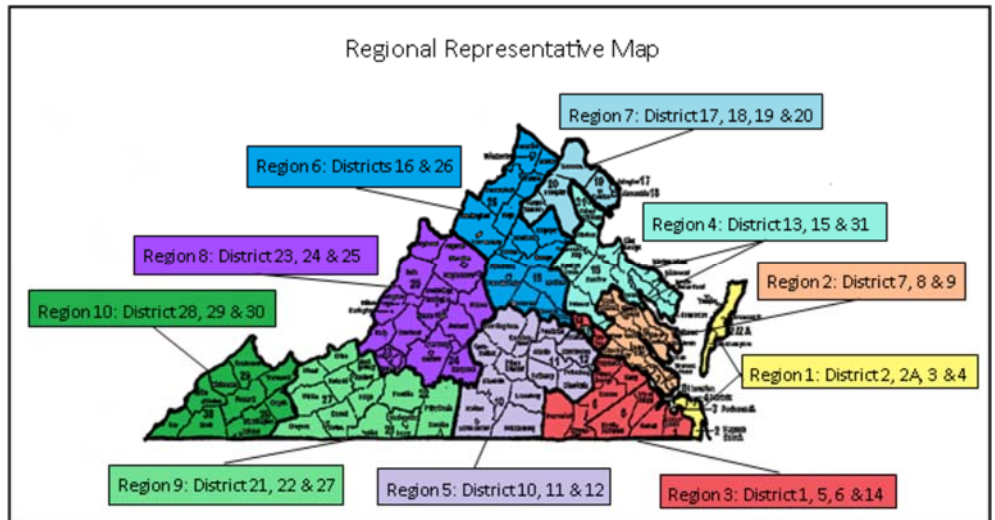
**When:** April 6-7, 2020  
**Where:** The DoubleTree Hotel,  
Charlottesville, VA

**Conference Highlights:**

Monday's session will include information for supervisors as well as stress-handling techniques for secondary trauma.

Tuesday's session will include sessions on active courthouse threats as well as a breakout session to discuss real court issues with other courts of similar jurisdiction and size. Look for more information in our February issue of *The Docket!*

*Don't forget to be thinking about nominations for our Clerk of the Year Recognition Program and your Region's raffle basket!*



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!

