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Foreword

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FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

It is with great pride that I present to you the first issue of Volume XIX of the *Journal of Law and the Public Interest*, the 2015 edition of our annual *General Assembly in Review*. The Editors and Staff of the *Richmond Journal of Law and the Public Interest* (JOLPI) devoted several months to this issue, and their dedication is greatly appreciated.

In particular, I would like to thank Kassie Schroth, our Editor-in-Chief, and Meg Donovan, our Executive Editor, for their hard work, determination, and support throughout the editing process of this *General Assembly* issue. I would also like to thank our Lead Articles Editors, Tyler Blaser and Brittany Burns, for their assistance in finding and securing authors for this issue. The 2015 *General Assembly in Review* would not have been possible without the collaborative support of the entirety of the JOLPI staff.

As a lover of Virginia politics, I am extremely proud of the articles published in this issue. The 2015 Virginia General Assembly Session was particularly eventful and this issue brings into focus several topics that were of great debate during Session. We hope that this issue will give you, our readers, in-depth insight into several important issues at the Virginia Capitol this year provided by notable members of the General Assembly community.

In *Let's Get Ethical, A Look at the New Ethics Reform in the Commonwealth of Virginia*, Davis Rennolds, Vice President for State Government Relations for McGuireWoods Consulting, elucidates the legislative reaction to calls for ethics reform in Virginia government. After the highly publicized trial of former Governor Bob McDonnell, the General Assembly passed legislation to significantly later Virginia's ethics requirements for those engaged in the legislative process. This article outlines the context behind the 2015 ethics reform bill, breaks down the newly passed law, and explains the impact it will have on the legislative process in Virginia.

In *Recent Children's Policy and Legislative Developments in Virginia: A Brief History, A Bright Future*, Delegate Chris Peace (97th District) and Amy Woolard of Voices of Virginia's Children, survey recent developments in Virginia's laws related to children's services. The article outlines

recent institutional advances in children's services and the move towards providing more family- and community-based care to children. They continue on to provide a detailed examination of Virginia's policies and the increased utilization of evidence-based best practices and research to improve programming.

In *Protecting the Digital Afterlife: Virginia's Privacy Expectation Afterlife and Choices Act*, Senator Mark Obenshain (26th District) and Delegate Jay Leftwich (78th District) discusses the impact that new law will have on the ability to access a decedent's digital assets. Senate Bill 1450, introduced by Senator Obenshain during the 2015 General Assembly session, allows personal representatives administering estates better access to a decedent's private information stores on the Internet, including emails, photos, and digital accounts. *Protecting the Digital Afterlife* offers a detailed look at new law that provides recourse to a quickly evolving issue.

In *What Role for Civility?*, Bob Gibson, Executive Director of the Sorensen Institute, provides an unique outlook on the state of the "Virginia Way" in Virginia politics. The General Assembly has experienced an increase level of partisanship which, in turn, has caused bystanders to question whether civility in Virginia politics is a thing of the past. Bob Gibson captures the concern and sentiments many share regarding the state of politics in Virginia today and calls for a return to civility in politics.

In *Who is Best Suited to Combat Sexual Violence on College Campuses?: An Analysis of H.B. 1785*, Susana Bass, a member of JOLPI's Senior Staff, elucidates new policies addressing the epidemic of sexual assault on college campuses. House Bill 1785, passed in reaction to several alarming cases of sexual assault at Virginia colleges, requires campus police to notify the Virginia Commonwealth's Attorney of any victim-initiated sexual assault investigations. This comment details the inner workings of House Bill 1785 and concludes that it is a good first step towards ending sexual assault on college campuses in Virginia.

We sincerely hope that these articles and the comment will provide you with a valuable tool to help in your practice areas. We encourage you to use this issue as a starting point for discussion, as well as a catalyst to encourage your involvement in the political process in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Sincerely,

Samantha Sedivy

Senior General Assembly and Manuscripts Editor