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# SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA



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## **Supreme Court of Virginia Releases Final Report of the Committee on Lawyer Well-Being**

[A Profession at Risk, Report of the Committee on Lawyer Well-Being of the Supreme Court of Virginia](#), is now available on Virginia's Judicial System Website, [www.vacourts.gov](http://www.vacourts.gov).

The 25-member Committee on Lawyer Well-Being, comprised of judges, bar leaders, and law school deans from around the Commonwealth, was led by Justice William Mims. The Committee was appointed by Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons in November 2017 to review the Report of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being, examine existing programs and procedures in Virginia, and make recommendations to improve the wellness and quality of professional services offered by lawyers and judges in the Commonwealth.

The National Task Force Report highlighted a disturbing increase in substance use and behavioral health disorders in the legal profession. The Supreme Court of Virginia's Report underscores that if the legal profession is at risk, so is the public that it serves: "The well-being of lawyers, judges, and law students in Virginia is integral to professional competence. A competent bench and bar in Virginia is essential to ensuring the protection of the public we serve."

The National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being included the American Bar Association, the National Organization of Bar Counsel, the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, the National Conference of Chief Justices, and the National Conference of Bar Examiners. Chief Justice Donald W. Lemons served on the National Task Force, which examined two national studies published in 2016 relating to behavioral health and substance use disorders among attorneys and law students.

Upon release of the Committee's report, Chief Justice Lemons stated "We owe it to our professional colleagues and to clients they serve to vigorously respond to what has been described as a 'wellness crisis' in the legal profession. Justice Mims has led a committee of leaders at the bench and bar in an effort to identify needs and develop a strategic plan to address them. All of us need to support these efforts."

About the Supreme Court of Virginia: The Supreme Court of Virginia possesses both original and appellate jurisdiction. The Court reviews decisions of lower courts, including the Court of Appeals, from which appeals have been allowed. Virginia does not allow an appeal to the Supreme Court as a matter of right except in cases involving the State Corporation Commission, certain disciplinary actions against an attorney, and review of the death penalty. The Court's original jurisdiction is limited to cases of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, and actual innocence. The Supreme Court also has original jurisdiction in matters filed by the Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission relating to judicial censure and retirement, and removal of judges. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court serves as the administrative head of Virginia's Judicial System. The Chief Justice is charged with overseeing the efficient and effective operation of the Judicial Branch.

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