



Spring Sections Seminar

April 29 – May 1, 2026

**The Virginian Hotel
Lynchburg**

Approved for 9.0 HRS CLE (1.0 HR Ethics)

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

6:00 PM — **Welcome Reception**, *Academy Center of the Arts Historic Theatre Lobby, 524 Main Street (Two blocks from the hotel)*

Sponsored by:  **Planet Depos**

7:30 PM — **Dine Around Dinners**

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

8:00 AM — **Registration Opens**

Sponsored by:  **BEACON HILL LEGAL**
Experts at Work  **IMS**
LEGAL STRATEGIES

8:00–8:55 AM — **Breakfast**

Sponsored by:  **Kincaid Wolstein** | VOCATIONAL & REHABILITATION SERVICES

8:55–9:00 AM — **Welcome**

Rachel D. G. Horvath, *Piedmont Liability Trust*, VADA President

9:00–10:00 AM — **2026 Legislative Updates, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Legislative Committee)

Defense lawyers know the law, but what do you do when the law changes? The 2026 Session of the Virginia General Assembly was particularly active and there will be many new hurdles, trip wires, and even landmines waiting for the uninformed defense lawyer. This presentation focuses on several key changes in the law that every good defense lawyer needs to know and how to implement them in his or her practice.

Patrick P. O'Grady, *Thomas, Thomas & Hafer*

THURSDAY, APRIL 30 (Continued)

10:00–11:00 AM — **Advanced Removal Strategy: Winning the Fight Over Federal Jurisdiction, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Policy Coverage)

This session explores strategic removal and remand practice, including snap removal, fraudulent joinder, nominal parties, realignment, and abstention. Designed for civil defense counsel, it offers practical guidance on securing federal jurisdiction, anticipating remand challenges, and understanding evolving case law.

Kathryn Bonorchis, *Lewis Brisbois*
John Mumford, *Hancock Daniel*

11:00-11:15 AM — **Break**

11:15–12:15 PM — **Is Your Indemnification Provision Enforceable? Applying Virginia Code § 11-4.1, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Corporate & Commercial)

Indemnity provisions relating to construction projects arise in a variety of circumstances. Since the Virginia Supreme Court's decision in *Uniwest Construction, Inc. v. Amtech Elevator Services* in 2010, in which the Court interpreted Virginia Code § 11-4.1, courts and practitioners alike wrestled with the limits of indemnification provisions in construction contracts. This panel will provide an overview of the fifteen years of Virginia state and federal case law that followed the *Uniwest* decision, including practical guidance for how to draft permissible indemnification provisions, how to avoid potential issues with such provisions, and how to litigate potentially void provisions.

Andrew O. Gay, *Gentry Locke*
Clay S. Hester, *Spotts Fain*

12:15-2:00 PM — **Lunch and Work Break**

Sponsored by: 
TURNING POINT
LIFE CARE PLANNING • EMPOWERING FUTURES

2:00–3:00 PM — **Court of Appeals Update: Reflections on the Brave New World of the Right of Civil Appeals, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Appellate Advocacy)

This panel will feature a discussion with an appellate lawyer and three judges of the Court of Appeals of Virginia on the Commonwealth's new right of appeal and its impact on civil appellate practice across Virginia. The judges will discuss appellate procedure, common pitfalls to avoid, and effective briefing and oral advocacy.

Hon. Marla Graff Decker, *Court of Appeals of Virginia*
Hon. Frank K. Friedman, *Court of Appeals of Virginia*
Hon. Lisa M. Lorish, *Court of Appeals of Virginia*
Moderator: W. Thomas Chappell, *Woods Rogers Vandeventer Black*

3:00-3:15 PM — **Break**

THURSDAY, APRIL 30 (Continued)

ATTEND EITHER THE GENERAL SESSIONS OR MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

GENERAL SESSIONS

3:15–4:15 PM — **Study of Recent Sovereign Immunity Cases, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Local Government)

Our speakers will discuss the evolving doctrine of Sovereign Immunity in Virginia with detailed discussion and analysis of recent cases and decisions of the Courts of Appeals and Virginia Supreme Court, including special insight into recently remanded cases. The session will also reference proposed legislation in the General Assembly seeking to limit the doctrine's application.

Melissa A. Hamann, *City of Chesapeake*

Adam J. Lantz, *City of Chesapeake*

4:15–5:15 PM — **Right to Repair Laws, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Products & Toxic Torts)

Right to Repair laws require manufacturers to provide owners and independent repair shops with access to parts, tools, and documentation to repair digital electronic equipment. Proponents of these laws want to give consumers the right to repair the products they purchase and forego relying on manufacturers to repair faulty equipment. The question becomes, then, who bears the responsibility for faulty repairs that cause injury? We will discuss these new laws and regulations, case developments, and possible exposure for faulty repairs. We will discuss how courts will allocate responsibility among manufacturers, independent repair shops, and consumers. In addition, we will discuss potential defense strategies. For the last few years, bills have been introduced during the General Assembly session in Virginia which would require manufacturers to provide access to tools, parts, and documentation so that individual consumers can repair their own digital products. The bills have died in session, but they will continue to be pushed.

Ben Abel, *Harman Claytor Corrigan & Wellman*

Imani Sowell, *Harman Claytor Corrigan & Wellman*

OR

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE (PART 1)

3:15 -4:15 PM — **Defending the Medicine: Translating Complex Care for Virginia Juries - A Trial and Carrier Perspective, 1.0 HR**

This session will prove strategies for presenting complex medical care to juries in a clear, credible and persuasive way while keeping their attention throughout the duration of the trial. It will also incorporate observations from the carrier side - including how they have seen changes in plaintiff strategies at trial (theatrical, getting closer to Golden Rule use, anchoring) and implementing methods to counter.

Amber Bockin, *The Doctors Company*

THURSDAY, APRIL 30 (Continued)

4:15 -5:15 PM — **The Invisible Advantage: What Modern Trial Teams Are Doing Differently, 1.0 HR**

Sponsored by:  **RCTS**
RIVER CITY TRIAL SOLUTIONS

Today's successful trial teams prepare cases very differently than they did 10 years ago. The most persuasive trial presentations are now the result of fully integrated, strategic use of services such as jury research, theme testing, case evaluations, and witness prep. Attendees will gain greater understanding of when and how to effectively utilize these services to elevate their case preparation and trial presentations.

Matt Banks, *River City Trial Solutions*
Susan Mitchell, *River City Trial Solutions*
Omar Maldonato, *River City Trial Solutions*

5:15–6:30 PM — **Networking Reception**

Sponsored by:  **THE
MCCAMMON
GROUP**

6:45–9:00 PM — **Dinner on Your Own**

6:45-9:00 PM — **Optional Women's Section Dinner**

Sponsored by:  **Planet
Depos**  **MDD**
A Davies Company

9:00–10:30 PM — **Late Night**

FRIDAY, MAY 1

8:00–9:00 AM — **Breakfast**

ATTEND EITHER THE GENERAL SESSIONS OR MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

GENERAL SESSIONS

9:00–10:00 AM — **The “Empty Chair” Superseding Causation Defense, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Auto & Transportation)

Soon enough, the roads of Virginia will be full of cars with empty driver's seats. But every day, accidents are caused by phantom vehicles and unknown or unidentified negligent actors on or off the road. Join us for updated practice pointers in defending clients for accidents they did not cause.

James A. Cales, *Furniss Davis Rashkind & Saunders*
Michael Thorsen, *McGavin, Boyce, Bardot, Thorsen & Katz*
Vivek K. Subramanyam, *Lewis Brisbois*

FRIDAY, MAY 1 (Continued)

10:00–11:00 AM — **The Requirements for a Willful Misconduct Defense to Workers' Compensation Claims in Virginia, 1.0 HR** (Organized by Workers' Compensation)

A willful misconduct defense can be a complete bar to a claimant's request for benefits. However, navigating a successful defense involves many intricacies and procedural requirements that will be explored in this presentation. Specifically, this presentation will explore the timeline requirements to assert the defense, as well as the threshold required in each prong to successfully assert the defense.

Albert Gutierrez, *Woods Rogers*

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE (PART 2)

9:00–10:00 AM — **Defending Against Claimed Violations of the VCPA, 1.0 HR**

Our speaker will be presenting on how to defend against claimed violations of the Virginia Consumer Protection Act. His presentation will break down the elements that Plaintiffs need to establish in order to successfully prove this cause of action and discuss strategies for defending against each element.

Ed Bailey, *Hancock Daniel*

10:00–11:00 AM — **Strategies for Undermining Plaintiffs' Claims for Past and Future Medical Expenses, 1.0 HR**

Compensatory damages can comprise a significant portion of a plaintiff's past and future damages claim. Although there can be a desire to focus the defense on standard of care and causation, spending some time preparing a defense to plaintiff's damages claim can help significantly reduce the value of their compensatory damages claim for mediation purposes and at trial. This presentation will encourage attendees to consider strategies for bringing down the value of a plaintiff's compensatory damages claim.

Michala Black, *Harman Claytor Corrigan & Wellman*

Kambria Talley, *Hancock Daniel*

11:00-11:20 PM — **Box Meals Available for Working Lunch**

Sponsored by:  **SAWYER**
CONSULTING
Your Partner in Case Strategy

11:20-11:30 PM— **Wellness Minute & Wellness Basket Raffle Winner Announced**

Sponsored by:  **SEA**
Know.

FRIDAY, MAY 1 (Continued)

11:30–12:30 PM — **How to Avoid Conflict of Interest Malpractice Missteps, 1.0 HR ETHICS**
(Organized by Professional Liability)

Sponsored by:  **ALPS**

The program will begin with a brief review of the specific conflict rules from the Rules of Professional Conduct. Next, we will challenge the typical excuses for not maintaining a formal conflict checking system and detail the key components of an effective conflict checking process. The program will conclude with a discussion of common conflict missteps that lawyers make coupled with practical advice on how to avoid these missteps.

Lisa Brook, *First Truth Law*

12:30 PM — **Adjourn**