

THE PARALEGAL PULSE

A NEWSLETTER OF
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION



Volume 1 / Issue 1
October 2024

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WELCOME TO COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION!

I am thrilled to welcome you to the very first edition of our new paralegal newsletter! As the president of our association, it is both an honor and a privilege to introduce this new platform dedicated to all the hardworking and talented paralegals in our state.

This newsletter is designed to share information for paralegals across the Commonwealth. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting your journey, our goal is to provide you with valuable information, tips, and resources that will help you excel in your career.

Your feedback and participation are vital to the success of this newsletter. We encourage you to share your thoughts, suggest topics, and contribute your own experiences and insights. Together, we can create a vibrant and supportive community where knowledge is shared, and professional growth is celebrated.

Thank you for being a part of our association, and for your commitment to the paralegal profession. We are excited to embark on this journey with you and look forward to bringing you content that informs, inspires, and empowers.

Welcome aboard, and happy reading!

Donna Donavant, ACP
President

<https://cvparalegals.org>
cvparalegals@gmail.com

ABOUT CVPA

Commonwealth of Virginia Paralegal Association (CVPA) was established to unite paralegals across the Commonwealth of Virginia, providing a platform for professionals to connect, exchange ideas, and learn from one another. CVPA serves as a venue for Virginia paralegals to work together to advocate for our profession, allowing paralegals around the state to join with their peers to promote professional development and integrity. Recognizing the need for paralegals without a local association to have a network for connection and ongoing access to continuing legal education, CVPA was created to fill this gap.

Our Executive Board members have been working diligently behind the scenes to bring this association to life. From initial discussions assessing the need and our capacity to undertake this initiative, to the present day where we have established CLE opportunities, secured sponsors, and grown our membership, we are proud to announce that we are now offering monthly CLEs, available both virtually and in-person. These CLEs will be held on the second Friday of each month, so please be sure to mark your calendars.

Additionally, we will be hosting networking events in various cities throughout the Commonwealth, and we are actively seeking hosts for these events. We are excited about the opportunities CVPA will provide for paralegals across Virginia, and we look forward to your participation and support as we continue to grow.

We are pleased to announce that we will be hosting a Launch Party networking event in Richmond this month. This event will provide an engaging and enjoyable opportunity to support CVPA while connecting with fellow professionals over exceptional food, drinks, and entertainment. We look forward to your attendance and participation.

As a final note, we would like to remind everyone that the success of our association is deeply reliant on the generosity and support of our legal community. If you are able to contribute your time or resources, we encourage you to reach out to us. Your involvement is invaluable, and we greatly appreciate your support.

MEMBERSHIP TYPES

Active (Voting Privileges) \$65.00

SPECIAL JOINING FEE OF \$50 IF YOU JOIN BY DECEMBER 31, 2024

Any individual who has:

- Graduated from an ABA approved program of study for paralegals;
- Graduated from an institutionally accredited paralegal program that is not ABA approved but that requires not less than the equivalent of sixty (60) semester hours of classroom study;
- Graduated from a course of study other than those set forth in 1 or 2 above, including with a baccalaureate degree in any field, plus at least six (6) months of in-house training as a paralegal, whose attorney-employer attests that the individual is qualified and working as a paralegal;
- Completed a paralegal certification program from an institutionally accredited college or university;
- Completed at least two (2) years of in-house training as a paralegal, whose attorney-employer attests that the individual is qualified and working as a paralegal, including those who completed at least two (2) years as an Associate member; or
- Successfully completed the NALA Certified Paralegal (CP) exam or the NFPA PACE (RP®) exam.



Associate (Non-Voting) \$25.00

Any individual who:

- Is a student in good standing at any university, college, junior college, or other approved school pursuing a course of studies as a paralegal, provided that all such schools and curricula shall be subject to approval of the Board of Directors of the association and is not actively employed as a paralegal;
- Has been a member of this association for at least five (5) years and resides in the Commonwealth of Virginia who has retired from the paralegal profession; or
- Those individuals who do not meet the requirements as an Active member, but are employed as a paralegal, whose attorney-employer attests that such individual is qualified as a paralegal. These members may apply for Active membership upon completion of two years of Associate membership.

Sustaining (Non-Voting) \$100.00

- An attorney who endorses or supports paralegals or who is involved in the promotion of the paralegal profession;
- An educator who teaches in a paralegal program whose students would qualify as Active members; or
- An individual or member of a law firm, corporation, vendor, or another entity who endorses, supports, or promotes the paralegal profession.

The Federal Freedom of Information Act and Why You May Not Receive All the Information You Requested

By Richard (Rich) Hahn, ACP

The Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 5 U.S.C. § 552 requires the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased or uncirculated information and documents controlled by the U.S. government upon request. Even though FOIA requires mandatory disclosure of records in possession of a federal agency, there are some exceptions to that mandate and this article will take a high-level look at the nine exemptions to FOIA.

Exemption 1 of FOIA exempts information that is classified to protect national security.

Exemption 2 exempts from mandatory disclosure records that are “related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency.” The Supreme Court has held that agencies must look to the plain language of Exemption 2. This was in the case of Milner v. Dep’t of the Navy, 562 U.S. 562, 569-70 (2011) in which the Court stated that “Exemption 2, consistent with the plain meaning of the term ‘personnel rules and practices,’ encompasses only records relating to issues of employee relations and human resources.”

Exemption 3 exempts information that is prohibited from disclosure by another statute, for example the Tiahrt amendment which prohibits the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms from releasing gun trace information to non-law enforcement entities.

Exemption 4 protects "trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person [that is] privileged or confidential. This exemption is intended to protect the interests of both the government and submitters of information. This exemption covers two distinct categories of information in federal agency records: (1) trade secrets; and (2) information that is (a) commercial or financial, (b) obtained from a person, and (c) privileged or confidential.



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Exemption 5 of FOIA covers the following:

1. Deliberative Process Privilege (provided the records were created less than twenty-five (25) years ago) The initial consideration under the deliberative process exemption is whether a record is of the type intended to be covered by the phrase "inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums
2. Attorney-Work product Privilege
3. Attorney Client Privilege
4. Presidential Communication Privilege

Exemption 6 of FOIA prohibits disclosure of information that would invade another individual's privacy. This exemption can also be applied to survivors (family members of a deceased person). I personally call this the Kobe Bryant exemption because his spouse won a case against the Los Angeles County Sheriff's office for the unauthorized release of photos of his body at the scene of the helicopter crash where Mr. Bryant and his daughter died.

Exemption 7 of FOIA exempts information compiled for law enforcement purposes that:

- 7(A) Could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings. This part of exemption 7 is why federal law enforcement agencies state that they will not comment on an open investigation. If you work for a firm that has insurance companies as clients and a fire or something is suspicious, exemption 7A is the reason you will not receive the origin and cause report as fast as you would like to receive it.
- 7(B) Exempts records that would deprive a person of the right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication such as information that could potentially contaminate a jury pool.
- 7(C) Exempts records that could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. An example of this is identifying information of individuals associated with a law enforcement proceeding, i.e. law enforcement officers' names, witness/interviewee identifying information.
- 7(D) Exempts documents that could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source.
- 7(E) Exempts from disclosure documents that would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions or disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk the circumvention of this law. Documents that could be exempt for disclosure under 7(E) are law enforcement manuals, and records pertaining to Watch Lists.

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- 7(F) Exempts documents that could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of an individual. The documents covered by this part of Exemption 7 are documents identifying information of law enforcement officers.

Exemption 8 prohibits disclosure of information that concerns the supervision of financial institutions.

Exemption 9 exempts disclosure of geological information on wells.

These nine exemptions and their subparts are why you may not receive all the information you requested in your Federal Freedom of Information Act request.

Rich Hahn, ACP

NALA Liaison Designee

MISSION STATEMENT: Our mission is to serve the Virginia paralegal community by providing continuing legal education, opportunities for networking, and by building camaraderie, and to increase access to justice by advancing the paralegal profession across Virginia.

STAY AHEAD WITH CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

Are you looking to sharpen your skills, stay updated with legal trends, and advance your career? Continuing Legal Education (CLE) is your key to professional growth!

Whether it's diving deeper into legal research, mastering new technologies, or staying current with changes in laws and regulations, CLE offers invaluable opportunities to expand your knowledge and expertise.

Why Invest in CLE?

- **Stay Competitive:** Keep your skills relevant in a fast-evolving legal landscape.
- **Boost Your Career:** Enhance your credentials and open doors to new opportunities.
- **Network with Peers:** Connect with fellow paralegals and legal professionals.
- **Meet Certification Requirements:** Stay compliant with mandatory CLE requirements.

Join us at CVPA for our upcoming CLE events tailored to empower paralegals like you. Let's continue learning and growing together!

**CVPA has submitted its application for NALA Affiliation.
All CVPA members must agree to be bound by the NALA Code of Ethics
and Professional Responsibility and by the Bylaws adopted by the
Commonwealth of Virginia Paralegal Association.**

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCT 2024

LAUNCH PARTY in Richmond!

Tuesday, October 8, 2024 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

The Park RVA, 1407 Cummins Drive, Richmond, Virginia 23220

IN-PERSON

Come join us at The Park RVA for some food, drinks, gifts, prizes, and networking while we celebrate YOU and OFFICIALLY launch Commonwealth of Virginia Paralegal Association! You don't have to be a member but we WANT you to be, and trust us, you want to be too!

Sponsors: **Planet Depos, MediVisuals, Prospect Blue**

RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **October 1, 2024**

CLE: AI in Action: Crafting Effective Prompts and Leveraging ChatGPT in Legal Work with Melissa Brooks

Friday, October 11, 2024, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, 700 E Jackson Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219

IN-PERSON AND ZOOM

Bring your lunch, your coffee, your A(I) game, and come listen to Melissa Brooks, Associate Professor at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and former Program Head of the Paralegal Studies Program, practicing paralegal with over 20 years of experience in the legal field, mentor to many, Wonder Woman, mother, classically trained pianist, the list goes on... provide a lunch time CLE in one of THE most relevant topics today in the legal field.

RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **October 9, 2024**

CVPA BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

IN-PERSON AND ZOOM

All are welcome!

RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **October 18, 2024**

NOV 2024

CLE: Legal Ethics with Michelle Wilson

Friday, November 8, 2024, 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Williams Mullen, 200 S. 10th Street, Richmond, Virginia 23219

IN-PERSON AND ZOOM - Lunch will be provided to those in-person.

Sponsor: **Capitol Services**

RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **November 6, 2024**

CVPA BOARD MEETING – VIRTUAL

Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

All are welcome! RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **November 15, 2024**

ALA Event: Professional Writing – VIRTUAL

Dr. Shannon Andrus with Word Nerd Consulting

Thursday, November 14, 2024, 12:00PM – 1:30PM

The Richmond Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators has invited CVPA members to their free November legal writing seminar. This seminar is a virtual meeting on Professional Writing.

Register at: <https://richmondala.org/meetinginfo.php?id=337&ts=1724773208>

DEC 2024

CLE: TBD with Abigail Davis-Hess

Friday, December 13, 2024, 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

More information to come

IN-PERSON AND ZOOM

CVPA BOARD MEETING – VIRTUAL

Tuesday, December 17, 2024, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

All are welcome! RSVP to: cvsparalegals@gmail.com by **December 13, 2024**

MEET THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

President..... Donna Donavant, ACP
Vice President..... Jessica Glickman
Secretary..... Jillian Sherman, ACP, MPA
Treasurer..... Quinn Gomola Mullin
NALA Liaison Designee... Rich Hahn, ACP
Director..... Ryan Mills
Director..... Katt Eaton
Director (non-voting)..... Carrie Warr

WHAT'S ON CVPA'S WEBSITE?

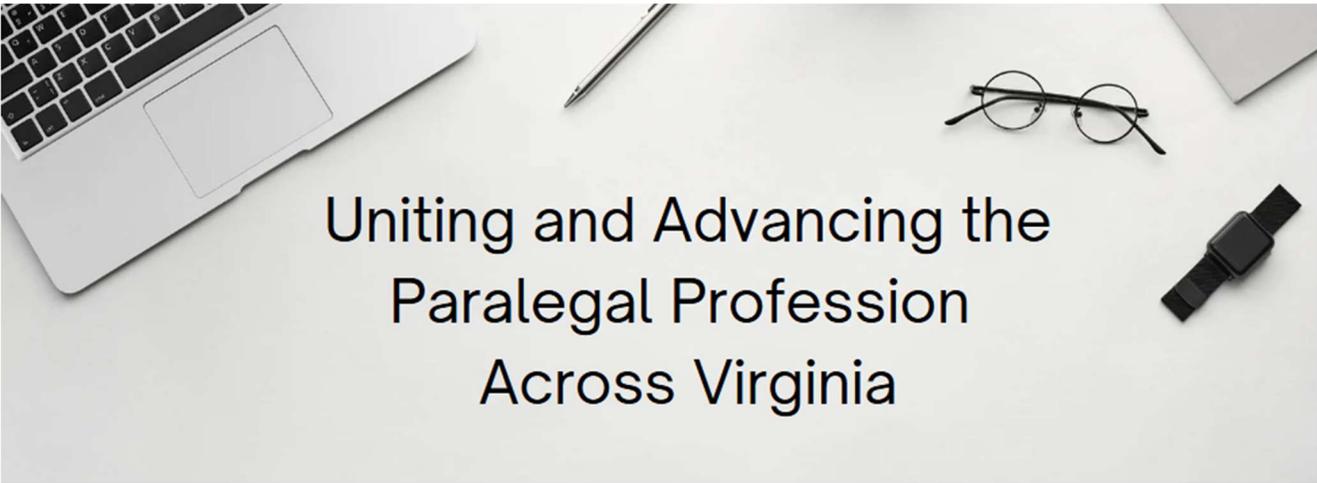
- Member benefits and application
 - Sponsorship form
 - Events

COMING SOON: Members Only Portal with Job Bank;
Mentorship program, and more!!

<https://cvparalegals.org>

Contact us at cvparalegals@gmail.com

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#)



Uniting and Advancing the
Paralegal Profession
Across Virginia