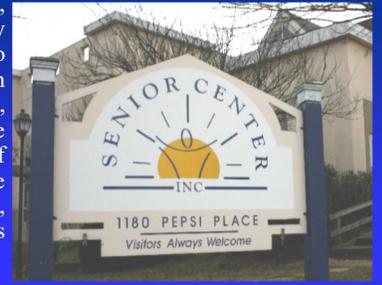


Senior
Statesmen of
Virginia

www.seniorstatesmen.org



The mission of SSV, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational and advocacy organization, is to enable seniors to identify and articulate their viewpoints on the issues affecting all citizens of Virginia, to encourage knowledge of and active participation in the legislative process of government, and to disseminate information about the social, governmental, and educational institutions that offer support and assistance.



MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The next meeting of the **Senior Statesmen of Virginia** will be held on **Wednesday, January 10, 2018, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m.** at the **Senior Center, Inc., 491 Hillsdale Drive**

Introducing Our Local Commonwealth's Attorneys

As most of us know, "Commonwealth's Attorney" is Virginia vernacular for "prosecutor" -- the D.A. who goes after the bad guys. There's a lot more to their job. Three examples:

- Prosecutors have wide discretion as regards whom they "throw the book at" and to whom they give second chances, as by sending them to "diversion" programs such as substance-abuse treatment versus locking them up. How they exercise that discretion is very important in determining the livability of the locality they serve, as New York City residents found when so-called "minor" crimes were ignored.
- Prosecutors can have a major impact on crime *prevention*, as by advising groups targeted by criminals about the scams likely to be tried on them.
- Prosecutors are among the best expert witnesses when legislators are considering changes to the criminal code or the process for considering criminal cases.

Our January program will allow us to hear from and ask questions of our brand-new City Commonwealth's Attorney, **Joseph Platania**, and our relatively new Albemarle County Commonwealth's Attorney, **Robert Tracci**.



Joe Platania was elected Charlottesville Commonwealth's Attorney this past November but he has been with that office since 2003. For much of that time he also served as a Special Assistant United States Attorney, helping to prosecute federal criminal cases. Joe is a graduate of Providence College and the Washington & Lee University School of Law. Before joining the City Commonwealth's Attorney's office he was an assistant public defender and an appellate attorney for the Virginia Capital Representation Resource Center. Joe is the current president of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Bar Association.



Robert Tracci was elected Albemarle County's Commonwealth's Attorney in November 2015. Before that he had been a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney and a Deputy Assistant Attorney General dealing with violations of federal criminal law. Prior to that Robert had been a senior staff member of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, the House committee that deals with criminal law and criminal procedure, voting rights, intellectual property and other areas. Robert is a Phi Beta Kappa alumnus of Ohio Wesleyan University and a graduate of the University of Illinois College of Law.

The program will be moderated by SSV Vice President, **Terry Cooper**.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

In case you missed the December 13 Meeting:

“Mediation in Central Virginia” was the topic for the December meeting. **Ed Lowry**, an attorney with MichieHamlett, virtually always recommends mediation to his clients as it provides an opportunity for clients to resolve disputes without the uncertainty and expense of litigation. **Richard Balnave**, UVA Law school, an expert in the areas of domestic relations and children’s law, has assisted the Virginia General Assembly studies concerning child support guidelines and mediation of child custody disputes. **Robyn Jackson** is the founder of The Civility School, which teaches social skills, modern manners, and professional etiquette to all ages. The Civility School’s battle cry is “for the comfort and convenience of others.”



Richard Balnave

Edward Lowry

Robyn Jackson

Although mediation is a voluntary process, a judge can order the parties to go to a mediation center to learn about the process, and then after they have learned what mediation is and how it differs from court, they are asked if they choose to stay or they would prefer to go back to court. In mediation, the participants sit in a private room with two mediators where what they say remains private, unlike the court situation which is open to the public, law enforcement, everyone, and all of their business becomes public information.

The percentage of couples who achieve agreement in mediation is much higher than the percentage of those who achieve agreement prior to the end of a court case. People report that they feel like they were finally able to say what was on their mind, and also they better understand what the concerns were of the other party.

Other major advantages of mediation as compared to the court process relate to time and money. Whereas it may take months or years to resolve an issue through the courts, mediation can provide a resolution in a single day. The impact on costs to the participants is obvious. In earlier times, the only options were court and arbitration. Arbitration is litigation on a private basis. You hire an arbitrator and that person makes the decision, but this process—like court—is horribly expensive. There are at least three costs to litigation. The economic cost can be withering if it is long and complicated litigation. The second is opportunity costs—the parties are spending hours and hours with their lawyers and others when they could be spending their time on things they want to do. The third are the emotional costs—it is very trying and exhausting to go through litigation.

You can listen to the entire program on the *Charlottesville Podcasting Network* at: <http://www.cvillepodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017-12-13-1-ssv.mp3>

Photo courtesy of Dan Gould, Charlottesville Podcasting network

Mark your calendar

Wednesday, February 14: *Becoming an age-friendly community*, presented by the Charlottesville Area Alliance--working toward an age friendly community: **Marta Keane**, JABA- moderator; **Brad Sheffield**, JAUNT- transportation to combat isolation; **Sunshine Mathon**, PHA- affordable housing for seniors; **Rebecca Schmidt**, Thomas Jefferson Health District-community health goals for seniors; **Peter Thompson**, Senior Center, Inc.-civic engagement and the role of SSV.

Wednesday, March 14: *an overview of criminal justice reform*, with Pat Nolan, former Republican leader of the California State Assembly, convicted felon and now head of the American Conservative Union Foundation's Center for Criminal Justice Reform.

*Membership in the SSV is open to all past and present citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. **Join now!** Annual dues are just \$20.00. Mail your check in the amount of \$20.00 (payable to "SSV") to Senior Statesmen of Virginia, P.O. Box 6591, Charlottesville, VA 22906. Telephone: 434-806-4474. E-mail: jimp@videoprovirginia.com*

Please visit our website at: www.seniorstatesmen.org/

Senior Statesmen of Virginia

P.O. Box 6591
Charlottesville, VA 22906