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# Richmond FBA Welcomes New Magistrate Judge with Lunch and Learn Event

## Virginia Rocket Docket Blog

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On June 12, the Richmond Division of the Federal Bar Association hosted a *Lunch and Learn* panel for chapter members, area practitioners, and special guests — the Honorable Mark R. Colombell and the Honorable Summer L. Speight, the Richmond Division's newest magistrate judge sworn in earlier this year. With her appointment, Judge Speight returns to the Richmond Division, having begun her legal career there as a law clerk for the Honorable M. Hannah Lauck. Before receiving her appointment as a magistrate judge, Judge Speight served as a partner with McGuireWoods LLP in Richmond, VA. There, she counseled and represented employers in all aspects of employment-related litigation, traditional labor law, employee benefits, and ERISA litigation.

On the bench since May 2021, Judge Colombell began the session by expressing his excitement to have a colleague with him again since he has filled both of the magistrate judges' roles since the Honorable Elizabeth Hanes's confirmation to district judge in August 2022. Judge Colombell joined the bench from ThompsonMcMullan P.C. in Richmond, VA.

At the *Lunch and Learn*, Judge Speight and Judge Colombell spoke about their time on the bench, gave tips and insights for successful practice in the E.D. Va. and Richmond Division, shared expectations for settlement conferences, and took questions from the audience.

Among the many instructive trial practice insights, Judge Colombell encouraged attendees to start with the jury instructions when planning and analyzing claims, defenses, and theories, while recommending turning to jury instructions early to map out trial strategy. He also cautioned that when counsel turn to jury instructions too late, it can cause disaster for trial.

Judge Speight encouraged attendees not to shy away from presenting *all* sides in the pre-conference, *ex parte* settlement conference memorandum when providing the realistic assessment of the strengths *and* weaknesses of their client's case. And both judges championed the importance of having the right business representative physically present at the settlement conference with authority to settle.

Scheduled throughout the year, the Richmond Federal Bar Association *Lunch and Learn* sessions offer an informative and informal opportunity for chapter members and practitioners to learn from Richmond Division experts on a variety of topics.

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