

Sunday, October 19, 2008

Announcing our branch office in Fairfax County, Virginia.

For many years, I have been defending about as many criminal cases in Virginia as in Maryland. In Virginia, I defend more criminal cases in Fairfax County than anywhere else in the commonwealth. Most of the counties where I practice in Virginia are a close drive to my office and home. However, many potential and actual Virginia clients would prefer the convenience of my having a Virginia office. Furthermore, some are on pretrial release that confines them to Virginia. Consequently, I researched shared office suite options, and selected a good one with full-time reception service in a nice office building with free parking in Tysons Corner in Fairfax County, Virginia. My Silver Spring, Maryland, office will continue to be my principal office. Here is the location of my new Virginia office: Jon Katz, P.C., 1420 Spring Hill Road, Suite 600, Tysons Corner/ McLean, Fairfax County, Virginia 22102, (703) 917-6626. Speaking of Virginia law practice, I understand that some D.C.-licensed lawyers toy with the idea of obtaining nothing more than a Virginia address in an effort to obtain a Virginia bar license without taking the Virginia bar exam. However, my reading of the governing legal provisions is that such reciprocity is only available to those who will be practicing full-time in Virginia. Therefore, I went to the trouble of preparing for and taking the Virginia bar exam twelve years ago, simultaneously handling a full trial litigation docket. After a long day of litigation work, I would plow through my home study course's audiotapes and workbooks, do practice essays that were evaluated by the course's owner and director, and then go back to work the next day. I am happy I went to the trouble of taking and passing the Virginia bar exam. I get many interesting cases and clients there. Unfortunately, Virginia's criminal justice system overall is the most draconian of all three states where I practice. In Virginia, for instance, Jencks material (statements of opposing witnesses) is generally not available in criminal cases; limited discovery is available for criminal cases, particularly in District Court; and a criminal defendant facing no more than one year in jail is forced to pursue a non-jury trial, and, only if convicted may the defendant then appeal for a jury trial de novo after such a conviction and sentencing. Handgun law is one area where Virginia criminal law is more favorable than the law in neighboring Maryland and the District of Columbia; Virginia breathes more life into the Second Amendment than the other two states. Also, Virginia law permits jury voir dire, which is tough to obtain in Maryland and Washington, D.C. Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 00:10