



## Richard J. Colten

### Principal

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**With more than four decades of experience in complex problem-solving in domestic relations and family law, Dick Colten provides discreet, comprehensive and zealous client representation through negotiation, mediation/arbitration, and litigation at both trial and appellate court levels.**

Recognizing that clients dealing with domestic relations issues are often undergoing emotional turmoil and situational disruptions that greatly impact their lives, he offers reasoned and expert legal advice, suggests strategy, and proposes alternative courses of action to steer a case through dispute resolution with both a high degree of professional skill and personal understanding and compassion. His background and know-how enable him often to craft innovative approaches leading to resourceful solutions to difficult issues.

Dick Colten employs a team approach to the practice of domestic relations law that puts the needs and best interests of the client at the forefront of his representation. Experience having shown that a well-informed and involved client is a valuable asset in achieving the best outcome, he informs clients about the laws and procedures that will govern the conduct of their cases and invites their participation in all appropriate respects. With additional skilled practitioners in diverse legal disciplines within the firm available to consult as appropriate, and a roster of prominent outside business, vocational, valuation and other experts accessible as needed, Dick vigorously and creatively guides clients through difficult and often confusing personal and family matters.

Domestic relations law in Virginia encompasses a wide range of issues of importance to individuals and families. Dick is pleased to offer representation in areas arising from traditional marital concerns, such as divorce; annulment; custody; parent relocation; parental child abduction; child and spousal support; and property distribution. He also assists clients in post-divorce enforcement issues, as well as such matters as

parentage; civil actions involving proceedings for desertion and nonsupport; obtaining or defending against protective orders; and child custody or visitation by grandparents or other third parties having a legitimate interest.

As a result of the recent landmark decisions of the United States Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* and the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Bostic v. Schaefer*, same sex couples, theretofore denied the right of and access to marriage in Virginia, may now wed. They face the same concerns and must deal with the same issues arising under domestic relations law as do heterosexual couples, but with little established Virginia precedent directly on point to guide them. Dick Colten is experienced and well qualified to assist with such matters and invites your questions.

Dick holds an AV Preeminent® rating by *Martindale-Hubbell*®, the highest possible rating awarded by both peers and members of the judiciary, for his legal ability and ethical standards.

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## Practice Areas

- Family Law

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## Education

- George Washington University Law School (1972)
- American University (1965)

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## Bar Admissions

- Virginia State Bar, 1972
- Supreme Court of the United States, 1976
- Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, 1975
- Virginia Supreme Court, 1972
- Eastern District of Virginia, 1972

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## Professional Honors & Activities

- Selected for inclusion in *U.S. News - Best Lawyers in America*® in the field of family law in Virginia every year since 1989
- Consistently recognized as one of the area's top divorce lawyers in *Washingtonian* magazine, in both the Virginia and Washington, D.C. metropolitan area editions of *Super Lawyers* magazine, in *Northern Virginia* magazine, *Virginia Business Magazine*, *Arlington Magazine*, and in other print and online publications
- Named "Lifetime Lawyer" by the *Washingtonian* magazine
- Martindale-Hubbell AV rated attorney for more than 30 years
- Listed among *Virginia Business* magazine's "Legal Elite" for Family Law
- "Superb Attorney Rating", AVVO Top Rated Lawyer (2024)
- Named by *BestofUS.com* to its list of Best Professional Service Providers in the U.S.
- Recognized by the American Registry as among the top 1% of America's Most Honored Professionals
  - Sections on Family Law and Law Office Management
  - Sections on Family Law, Economics and Law Office Management
  - Member, Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board by appointment of the Virginia Supreme Court (1997-2003; 2009-2018)

- Member, Virginia Bar Council for the Nineteenth Judicial District (1989-1995;2004-2009)
- Member, Judicial Nominations Committee (1996-1999)
- Member, Standing Committee on Lawyer Discipline (1995-1997)
- Member, Tenth District Grievance Committee (1985-1988)
- Family Law Committee
- Member, Board of Directors (1981-1994)
- Member, Judicial Nominations Committee (1996-1999)
- Member, Public Service Committee (1996-1998)
- Member, Professionalism Committee (1995)
- General District Courts Committee (Member 1981-1987; Secretary 1983-1987)
- Grievance Committee (Member 1978-1981; Chair 1978-1980)

A strong proponent of community service, Dick Colten throughout his career has served the legal profession and the community through his support of and participation in community service organizations and endeavors. He was a Substitute Judge of the General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts for Virginia's Nineteenth Judicial District for twelve years. He is a Commissioner in Chancery and a Conciliator and Neutral Case Evaluator for equitable distribution cases in the Fairfax County Circuit Court and sits, on occasion, as a Circuit Court Judge *Pro Tempore* by judicial appointment. Dick is a former director of the Fairfax County Legal Aid Society (1976-1979) and Legal Services of Northern Virginia (1996-2010).

## News & Insights

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- Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Recognized in 2026 Virginia Super Lawyers and Rising Stars
- Fairfax Circuit Court Awards \$245,000 in Attorneys' Fees After Custody Trial
- FAQ: Custody Litigation & Attorneys' Fees (Virginia)
- Blankingship & Keith, P.C. Announces 2025 Northern Virginia Magazine Top Attorneys
- Thirty Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Recognized in the 2026 Editions of Best Lawyers in America® and Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch®
- Twenty-Seven Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Shine in the 2025 Edition of Best Lawyers in America
- Four Blankingship & Keith Family Law attorneys Named Washingtonian Top Divorce Lawyers
- Twenty Blankingship & Keith, P.C. Attorneys Named Virginia Super Lawyers and Rising Stars for 2024
- Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Shine as "Legal Elite" in Virginia Business Magazine's 2023 Rankings
- Ten Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Recognized as "Top Lawyers" by Northern Virginia Magazine
- Twenty-two Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Shine in the 2024 Edition of Best Lawyers in America
- Blankingship & Keith, P.C. Attorneys Named Virginia Super Lawyers and Rising Stars for 2023
- 20 Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Named "Legal Elite" by Virginia Business Magazine
- Five Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Named "Top Lawyers" by Northern Virginia Magazine
- Ten Blankingship & Keith Attorneys Named "Top Lawyers" by Washingtonian Magazine
- Washingtonian Honors Three Blankingship & Keith Attorneys with Lifetime Achievement Awards