

Lawyer raps VTLA over payee notice

Dear Editor:

I am disappointed that the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association objects to a proposed "payee notification" statute ("Payee-notice plans need more work, VTLA says," Sept. 21). No rational consumer would think that having an insurance company mail them a notice that says "the check is in the mail to your attorney" is a bad idea. Those clients of Stephen Conrad who had their cases "settled" and their money stolen certainly must wonder why the VTLA would take such a position.

I doubt that any consumer, after being told by their attorney that "one of the things that is going to happen, now that your case is settled, is that you will get a notice from the insurance company" will give receipt of the notice a second thought, much less feel that somehow this must be a special law "singling out" plaintiff's attorneys.

The "solutions" proposed by the VTLA (i.e., more random audits and "Hey, everyone just throw another \$25 into the pot for the Clients' Protection Fund") act as an additional tax on the small business owner. A tax of either his time or his money. (The mere fact that there is such a thing as "Clients' Protection Fund" says much more to consumers than does the proposed notice regarding settlement.)

Payee notification is not perfect and it does not solve all attorney theft, but being against a proposal that would likely have prevented almost all of Conrad's crime strikes me as a really bad idea.

Benjamin Glass
Fairfax