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## Introduction

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In addition to summary and analysis of Fourth Circuit and Supreme Court of Virginia Cases, this issue of Capital Defense Digest contains a series of student authored articles on subjects of considerable importance in current practice. One is an objective, step by step analysis of the current state of DNA evidence in criminal trials. It includes an explanation of the DNA identification process in terms understandable to lay persons, a discussion of those aspects of the process that may yield unreliable results, and a review of the current state of the law on admissibility. Another timely article deals with the scope of Virginia's drug predicate capital murder section.

Two articles address issues that have been with us somewhat longer but nevertheless warrant examination. One is a survey of judicial assessment of reasons for peremptory strikes advanced by prosecutors in the face of challenges based on *Batson v. Kentucky*. Finally, there is a detailed review of possible approaches to gathering and presenting penalty trial evidence.

As always, we welcome comments, questions, suggestions.

William S. Geimer  
*Director*

