

"We Have One Thing in Common – We Like To Win"

Practice Areas

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Child Support



The "Right" Way to Handle a Police Stop

When a police officer pulls you over, what you say and how you react could have a major impact on the legal proceedings that may follow. And if at the end of your trial, the case comes down to who the judge believes, how you handled yourself during the initial stop could tip the scales of justice in your favor.

Due to the many police shootings in the news, clients often ask me what is it they should do to ensure the safety of everyone. At a recent community law forum, we developed six steps to help you stay safe during a police

stop.

(1) **Avoid getting pulled over for small infractions like a broken tail light by keeping your car up to date.** These are things that immediately draw the attention of officers. That coupled with expired inspections or registrations are guaranteed to result in a police stop.

2. **If pulled over keep both hands on the steering wheel or in the air.** Officers do not know if there is a weapon in the vehicle or if you are reaching for one. By keeping your hands visible, it eases some of the

fear officers have when approaching your car.

3. **Try to stay calm and be "overly" respectful.** There is no question that for most citizens, when you see those blue lights start flashing behind you, fear and anxiety can immediately set in. Try to stay calm so that you can understand why it is that you are being stopped. DO NOT argue with the officer about whether violating the law (leave that to your lawyer) but instead answering with a "yes officer" or "no officer" can go a long way in court or could even result in a warning instead of a summons.

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4. **Look straight ahead.** Looking all around as if you are trying to figure out the best way to get away from the officer can make them nervous.

5. **Loudly say what you are doing and explain every moment.** If the officer asks me for my license and registration and my Purse is on the floor near my leg, you should tell the officer that and ask for permission to reach down to your purse or in the glove box to get the items he is requesting.

6. **If stopped at night, turn on the dome light of your car.** Remember, as the officer walks up to your car, he/she has no idea how many people are in the car, if a firearm is on the seat, etc. If you turn the dome light on he can see even before approaching your vehicle what he may be up against.

If you would like to learn more about ways to stay safe or even what your

rights are during a police stop come and see Attorney Cooper as she will be serving as a panel member at the 2nd Community Law Forum. She will be answering questions like:

*should a teenager respond if they are questioned by the police?

*is it legal to use marijuana in Virginia?

*can the police search your car without a search warrant?

Event: Community Law Forum

Date: Saturday December 3, 2016

Time: 10:00 A.m.-1:00PM

Where: New Testament Church
403 Rapidan Street
Portsmouth, VA 23701

Thanksgiving Oyster Stuffing



Total Time: 2 hr 10 min

Prep: 1 hr

Inactive: 10 min

Cook: 1 hr

Yield: about 4 to 6 side dish serving

Level: Easy

Ingredients

20 oysters, shucked, plus their liquor (See Cook's Note)

3 cups coarsely crumbled cornbread, recipe follows

3 slices bacon, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch strips

1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

3 medium shallots, thinly sliced

2 celery stalks (with leaves), thinly sliced

2 teaspoons kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme

2 tablespoon white dry vermouth

Cornbread for Stuffing:

1 cup stone-ground cornmeal

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon sugar

1/4 teaspoon fine salt

1 large egg

1/2 cup whole milk

2 tablespoons melted unsalted butter, plus more for the brushing the pan

Directions

Put the oysters in a strainer over a medium bowl to catch their liquor. Reserve 3/4 cup of the oyster liquor. In a large bowl, combine the crumbled cornbread and oysters.

Bring a small saucepan of water to a boil. Add the bacon and cook for 1 minute. Drain and pat dry with a paper towel.

Melt 1/2 cup of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When the foaming subsides, add the bacon, shallot, celery, salt, and season with pepper, to taste. Cook, stirring, until soft, about 10 minutes. Add the parsley, thyme, reserved oyster liquor, and vermouth and bring to a boil. Transfer the shallot-herb mixture to the cornbread and oysters and stir to combine. Set aside for 10 minutes. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Transfer the cornbread mixture to a buttered 1-quart gratin dish, dot with the remaining butter, and bake until browned and crusty, about 1 hour.

Remove from the oven and serve immediately.

Cook's Note: Try to find already shucked oysters in their liquor (juice) in small plastic tubs at your local supermarket or seafood monger.

Cornbread for Stuffing:

Butter a 3 1/4 x 5 3/4 x 2-inch loaf pan. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. In a large bowl, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt.

In a medium bowl, whisk the egg and combine with the milk. Pour the milk mixture into the cornmeal mixture and mix lightly with a rubber spatula until a thick batter is formed. Stir in the melted butter until just incorporated.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Bake until lightly browned and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 30 minutes. Let cool.

Yield: 1 small loaf of cornbread

Read more at: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchens/oyster-stuffing-recipe.html?oc=linkback>

Opposites Don't Have to Attract to Terminate Spousal Support

In Separation Agreements parties can stipulate to specific requirements of when and how spousal support is terminated. Absent an agreement (or specification in the agreement), [Virginia Code §20-109\(A\)](#) controls. This law provides that if “the spouse receiving support has been habitually cohabiting with another person in a relationship analogous to a marriage for one year or more... the court shall terminate spousal support...”

In a recent [Virginia case](#), an ex-husband filed a motion to adjust/terminate spousal support, alleging that his ex-wife was now engaged to be married to another female and had been cohabitating continuously with the fiancé for at least one year. After unsuccessful hearings in Circuit Court and the Court of Appeals of Virginia, the ex-husband appealed to the Virginia Supreme Court.

The Virginia Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples (as well as opposite-sex couples) could cohabit within the meaning of Virginia Code § 20-109(A). The Court observed that the law is gender neutral as the words “spouse” and “person” encompass individuals of either gender. Hence, in the event that your former spouse cohabitates with another person (no matter that person's gender) after one year, you may have grounds to terminate an award of spousal support that was agreed to in a Separation Agreement or was court ordered.

If you believe that spousal support should be terminated in your case, please call The Cooper Law Firm, P.C. to schedule a free 30-minute consultation with our knowledgeable attorneys whom can better evaluate your matter and fight for you.

Click [here](#) for the full Virginia Supreme Court Opinion (Luttrell v. Cucco VA 150770 S.E.2d (2016)).

**Contributed by Jessica H. Dixon, Esquire of The Cooper Law Firm, P.C.*

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We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.cooperlawva.com

Employee Highlight Corner



Meet our newest legal assistant, Elissa Sanford! She is a native of Hampton Roads but travelled a lot growing up due to her father's military service. She is a graduate of Old Dominion University with a Biology Degree. While preparing to apply for medical school, Elissa gained an interest in the study of law. She started interning in our office and had opportunities to attend court hearings and spend a day

shadowing a local judge. From there, Elissa knew that the field of law was where she wanted to be. Elissa joined our firm as a full time legal assistant October 2016. She assists Attorney Dixon with her family law practice. In her spare time Elissa likes to workout, read or go horseback riding. Her favorite food is sushi. We are so happy to have her on board!!



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Joyvan Malbon-Griffin, Esq.



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