



VIRGINIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

January 29, 2014

MARYSE C. ALLEN
President
KYUNG (KATHRYN) DICKERSON
President-Elect
BETSY SUE SCOTT
Secretary
CYNTHIA KAPLAN REVESMAN
Treasurer
MARY GRACE A. O'MALLEY
Immediate Past President
CATHERINE M. REESE
Second Past President

Board of Directors
SHEILA COSTIN
CATHERINE SENKOW CROFT
MICHELE CUMBERLAND
LABRAVIA JENKINS
CHANDRA LANTZ
DARREL TILLAR MASON
C. KAILANI MEMMER
CHRISTINE MOUGIN-BOAL
ANGELA MOREHOUSE
RENAE REED PATRICK
ELIZABETH PENDZICH
JENNIFER DILLOW ROYER
SAMEENA SABIR
JONNIE SPEIGHT
KAREN ZELLO

KATIE HOVDA
Administrative Director

POST OFFICE BOX 190
LEESBURG, VIRGINIA 20178
PHONE: 804-282-6363
www.VWAA.org

E-Mail: VWAA@live.com

VIA FACSIMILE OR EMAIL

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Senate of Virginia
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23218

The Honorable David T. Albo
Chair, Courts of Justice
General Assembly Building
P.O. Box 406
Richmond, Virginia 23218

**Re: Vacancy in the Circuit Court
of the Twentieth Judicial Circuit**

Dear Senator Norment and Delegate Albo:

On behalf of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association ("VWAA"), a regional committee (the "Committee") was impaneled to evaluate candidates for the vacancy on the Circuit Court of the 20th Judicial Circuit occasioned by the retirement of the Honorable Thomas D. Horne.

The VWAA, through its regional Committee, invited candidates to participate in our judicial screening process. The process requires each candidate submit a completed VWAA Judicial Candidate Questionnaire and resume and encourages the appearance of the candidate for an interview with the Committee.

In screening the candidates for the judiciary, the following rating categories are used by the VWAA:

(1) NOT QUALIFIED: Applied to any applicant who fails to meet the minimum requirements for fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, integrity and/or other basic criteria set forth in the ABA Guidelines.

(2) QUALIFIED: Applied to any applicant who meets the minimum requirements for fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, integrity and/or other basic criteria set forth in the ABA Guidelines.

(3) RECOMMENDED: Applied to applicants whose qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements to warrant the Committee's affirmative recommendation.

(4) HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Reserved for any candidate who is especially well-qualified for the position and merits special recommendation.

The VWAA's procedures provide that ratings of "Qualified" and "Recommended" require a vote in support by at least a simple majority of the Committee. A rating of "Highly Recommended" requires a vote in support by at least a two-thirds majority of those voting. For the Committee to find that a candidate fails to meet the minimum qualifications and is "Not Qualified," at least two-thirds of those voting must so find.

The Board of Directors of the VWAA has approved, in accordance with its procedures, the following ratings reached by the Committee for this vacancy:

Jeanette Irby, Esquire is found *highly recommended*.

Lorrie A. Sinclair, Esquire is found *recommended*.

Jennifer Dore Cisneros, Esquire is found *qualified*.

Executive summaries of the qualifications of each of the above candidates are attached to this letter.

For your further information, the Committee members participating in the interview process were:

Bonnie Hoffman, Esquire: Ms. Hoffman is the Deputy Public Defender for the Loudoun County Public Defender's Office and has been with that office since 1995. Her practice is exclusively in the field of criminal defense where she handles a variety of felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile cases. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1994.

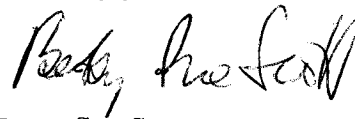
Nan Joseph, Esquire: Ms. Joseph is a principal with the law offices of Joseph & Mische, P.C. and focuses her practice in family law. She has been a member of the Virginia Bar since

1976. She is a member of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and currently serves on the Board of Governors of the Family Law Section for the Virginia State Bar. She has previously served as chair of the VTLA Family Law Section, as President of the Loudoun County Bar Association, and on the Board of Governors for the Virginia State Bar Senior Lawyer's Conference.

Betsy Sue Scott, Esquire: Ms. Scott is the principal of the Law Office of Betsy Sue Scott and focuses her practice in the areas of export and trade compliance, wills, trusts, estates, guardianships/conservatorships and elder law. She serves as the Secretary of VWAA and previously served two terms as the President of the Loudoun Chapter of VWAA. She has been a member of the Virginia Bar since 2007.

We hope that this information will prove helpful to you during your selection process for this very important judicial position. Please feel free to contact VWAA President Maryse C. Allen at (703) 538-5143 should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely yours,



Betsy Sue Scott
Judicial Chair, Loudoun Chapter
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures: Executive Summary of Jennifer Dore Cisneros, Esquire
Executive Summary of Jeanette A. Irby, Esquire
Executive Summary of Lorrie A. Sinclair, Esquire

Cc (by email only): Jennifer Dore Cisneros, Esquire
Jeanette A. Irby, Esquire
Lorrie A. Sinclair, Esquire

Cc (by email only): Senator Richard H. Black
Senator Mark Obenshain
Senator Jill Holtzman Vogel
Senator Barbara Favola
Senator Jennifer Wexton
Delegate Randy Minchew
Delegate Michael Webert
Delegate Thomas Greason
Delegate David LaRock
Delegate Barbara Comstock
Delegate David Ramadan

JEANETTE A. IRBY

Experience and Legal Ability: Jeannette Irby received her Juris Doctor from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Michigan in 1988 and earned a Bachelor of Science degree *cum laude* from Central Michigan University. From 1988 to 1994 while in Michigan, Ms. Irby had a solo law practice focusing on domestic relations law and handled court-appointed misdemeanor and felony criminal cases. In 1995, she moved to Fauquier County, Virginia, and was admitted to the Virginia Bar. Ms. Irby also is a member of U.S. Bankruptcy Courts for both the Eastern (2004) and Western (2007) Districts of Virginia.

From 1995 to 2000, Ms. Irby was an associate with the Warrenton firm, Walker Jones, where her practice included domestic relations, civil and criminal cases. While at this firm, she represented Fauquier County Department of Social Services in abuse, neglect and removal cases. Her practice also included bench and jury trials before the General District and Circuit Court. For four years thereafter, Ms. Irby served as law clerk to Judges Robertson and Parker of the Fauquier County Circuit Court. In that position, she acted as a Neutral Case Evaluator Coordinator in the Court's Alternate Dispute Resolution Program. In 2004, she became the Assistant County Attorney for Fauquier County, where she represented the County in tax and zoning matters and provided legal advice to several offices and agencies of the County. In 2007, Ms. Irby became the Town Attorney for the Town of Leesburg. In this position, she provides legal representation for the Leesburg Town Council and serves as a legal advisor to the Town Manager and several Town Departments, including Human Resources, Police and Public Works. Ms. Irby also prosecutes and assists the defense of all civil matters concerning the Town of Leesburg in court.

Ms. Irby is a member of the Loudoun County and Fauquier Bar Associations and the Loudoun Chapter of VWAA. She is also a member of the Local Government Attorneys Association, where she has served on several committees, including its *Pro Bono* Committee. For four years, she served as the Chair of Loudoun's Leadership for the Law Summer Camp.

Ms. Irby's current practice as Leesburg Town Attorney focuses primarily on civil matters and litigation. However, prior to her joining the Fauquier County Attorney's Office in 2004, Ms. Irby handled a broad variety of civil and criminal matters. This included service as a law clerk for the Fauquier County Circuit Court for four years, where she was tasked to handle both civil and criminal matters. Prior to her law clerk experience, she worked on criminal matters in private practice in Warrenton and Michigan. In her governmental service, Ms. Irby reports that she currently appears before state courts of record and other courts as well as state and federal administrative agencies. While she currently has limited experience in trials to conclusion in courts of record during the past five years, her past practice in Michigan included five years of criminal jury trial cases. Of her current litigation experience, she reported that seventy percent falls into the civil area, with the remaining thirty percent divided between zoning violations and administrative matters.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, the Committee determined that Ms. Irby demonstrated a pattern and practice of the requisite fairness and temperament

expected of a Circuit Court judge. In her public service legal career, she has shown the decisiveness, open-mindedness, patience, and understanding that are necessary elements of conflict resolution before the courts.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee observed that Ms. Irby has demonstrated the high degree of impartiality and professionalism required by a sitting judge. She has exhibited honesty and truthfulness in her representations and the courage to undertake many challenges to the *status quo*. She has worked for the betterment of the delivery of legal services to the community in her critical role in the development of the Neutral Case Evaluation program in Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was impressed with the breadth and depth of Ms. Irby's legal skills and knowledge, her professionalism, management abilities, and problem-solving approaches. It found that her impartiality, experience, intellect, temperament, service to the profession and community, and integrity place her well above the requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merit special recognition as **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

LORRIE A. SINCLAIR

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Sinclair received a Juris Doctor from Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William & Mary in 1996 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1996. Ms. Sinclair is also admitted to practice in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Ms. Sinclair has been a principal at the law firm of Sinclair Taylor PLLC, Leesburg, Virginia since 2008. Her practice encompasses a wide range of legal areas including estate planning, civil commitments, serving as guardian *ad litem* for juveniles and incapacitated adults, and court-appointed criminal cases for misdemeanors, felonies, and juvenile matters. Ms. Sinclair was appointed as a Special Justice for civil commitments for the 2008-2014 term and has presided over more than one hundred civil commitment hearings. She was appointed a substitute judge in 2011 and has sat in the General District Court in Loudoun County, the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Courts in Culpeper, Frederick, and Loudoun. In addition to her practice, she has served as a contractor at Pro-telligent, LLC, teaching comparative law and contractor legal responsibilities for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Ms. Sinclair also served as a Legal Instructor at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy from December 2004 until July 2008.

Ms. Sinclair began her career as a Research Assistant at the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, and subsequently as Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Virginia Beach. Ms. Sinclair moved to Northern Virginia in 1999 and worked as an Associate Attorney at The Trade Mark Institute and then at law firm in Sterling. In 2001, Ms. Sinclair returned to public service as Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Loudoun County where her experience included both felony and misdemeanor bench trials and jury trials. Ms. Sinclair was appointed by former Chief Justice Leroy R. Hassell to the Court Reporters Committee (2007) and to the Virginia State Bar Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Board (2011-2014). Ms. Sinclair is an active member Virginia State Bar where she currently serves as an At Large Member of the Virginia State Bar Council (2012-2015), and active member of the Loudoun County Bar Association, where she is a past President and Board member.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Sinclair demonstrated to the Committee that she has a keen sense of justice and possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a Circuit Court judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Ms. Sinclair possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the Circuit Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was impressed with Ms. Sinclair's depth and breadth of experience including her recent expanded experience in the areas of domestic relations, tort and estate law and general civil litigation. Her experience in civil matters continues to increase through her service as Substitute Judge and Special Justice. Her dedication to and leadership in community service and Bar-related endeavors, on a local and state-wide basis, is commendable. Ms. Sinclair has demonstrated frankness and composure, which complement her integrity and judicial temperament. The Committee found that her fairness, temperament intellect, and

professionalism are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and therefore merit the designation of **RECOMMENDED**.

JENNIFER DORE CISNEROS

Experience and Legal Ability: Jennifer Dore Cisneros received her Juris Doctor, *cum laude*, in 2004 from American University-Washington College of Law. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree with Honors in Economics from Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois, in 1991. She also holds a certificate in accounting from Northwestern. She was admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia (2004) and before the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (2005).

Since 2005, Ms. Cisneros has been a principal with the firm of Whitbeck Cisneros McElroy, P.C. Prior to forming this firm, Ms. Cisneros was an associate with Dunlap, Grubb Weaver & Whitbeck, P.C. for approximately nine (9) months. Beginning in 2002, while still in law school, Ms. Cisneros worked part-time with Smith, Pachter, McWhorter & Allen, P.C. Upon graduating, she joined the firm as a full-time associate attorney.

Prior to law school, Ms. Cisneros first worked as an Options Trader for B.L. Rice & Associates for 8 years and then as a financial analyst for FactSet Research Systems, Inc. for 3 years

Ms. Cisneros is a member of the Loudoun County Bar Association and the VWAA, where she has previously served as the Loudoun Chapter secretary. Ms. Cisneros has regularly served as a mentor in Loudoun's Leadership in the Law Camp program. She also participates in a financial education program geared towards women in which she presents on the topic of estate planning. She also takes several cases on *a pro bono* basis from Northern Virginia Legal Services and has previously accepted cases from the Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter to assist victims in obtaining protective orders. Within the community, she is active in Middleburg Academy's Parents Association.

She regularly appears in court, with approximately 50% of her time spent in state courts of record and approximately the same amount of time in state juvenile and domestic relations and general district courts. She has tried twenty (20) or more cases to conclusion in a court of record in the past five years, with virtually all of those cases being bench trials. Her current practice is primarily focused on family law, although she previously handled both criminal and general civil litigation. Her prior work with Smith Pachter focused on construction and government contract cases. Ms. Cisneros reports that, over the last five years, approximately 20% of her litigation consisted of criminal matters, 78% in civil matters and the remaining 2% in administrative hearings.

While with Smith Pachter, Ms. Cisneros did considerable legal writing. However, her more recent practice has seen a lower volume of legal writing beyond the drafting of pleadings. Since July 2013, Ms. Cisneros has served as a substitute judge in the Juvenile and Domestic Relations and General District Courts, where she has presided over 10 trials to verdict, including two day-long modification of custody and visitation cases.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Cisneros has demonstrated an understanding of the judge's role in the judicial process and a recognition that

the administration of justice and the rights of the parties transcend the judge's personal desires. The Committee has determined that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a Circuit Court Judge.

Professionalism and Impartiality: During her broad experience before bar admission and thereafter, Ms. Cisneros has shown a strong interest in financial responsibility and regularly shares her knowledge with others through community education. The Committee is satisfied that Ms. Cisneros would exercise the impartiality and professionalism required by a sitting Judge.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee is satisfied with Ms. Cisneros' fairness, intellect, temperament, professionalism and integrity. The Committee took note of her prior experience in the financial sector and her diligence and perseverance in later attaining her law degree. While considering her nine years of legal experience with a concentration in domestic relations, the Committee recognized Ms. Cisneros' additional practice areas of criminal and contract law, trusts and estates, and debt collection. The Committee found that she meets the requirements for the position of Circuit Court Judge and merits the designation of **QUALIFIED**.