



VIRGINIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

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**VIA FACSIMILE (OR EMAIL)**

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

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

**Re: Vacancies 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 upcoming vacancies on the Circuit Court (20<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit) occasioned by the announced retirements of the Honorable James H. Chamblin and Thomas D. Horne.

The VWAA process requires the submission of a completed VWAA Judicial Candidate Questionnaire, the candidate's resume and encouragement of the appearance of the candidate for an interview with the Committee.

The following endorsement 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 endorsements of "Qualified" and "Recommended" require a vote in support by at least a simple majority of the Committee. An endorsement of "Highly Recommended" requires a vote in support by at least a two-thirds majority of those voting. In order 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 endorsements of the Committee(s) for these vacancies:

Jeanette Irby, Esquire is found *highly recommended*.

William Atwell, Esquire is found *recommended*.

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

Steven E. Sincavage, Esquire is found *qualified*.

Zaida C. Thompson, 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:

Mary L.C. Daniel, Attorney at Law: Ms. Daniel is the President and Managing Attorney of The Daniel Group, Attorneys at Law, PC, in Winchester, which she founded in 1998. She practices in Virginia and West Virginia, emphasizes contract and small business matters, focusing specifically on post-judgment executions. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1994.

E. Kate Fitzgerald, Attorney at Law: Ms. Fitzgerald is a partner at Capsalis Fitzgerald, PLC. Her practice focuses on criminal and civil matters in Virginia and she has been a member of the Virginia Bar since 2009.

Bonnie Hoffman, Attorney at Law: 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 traffic cases. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1994.

Renae Reed Patrick, Attorney at Law: Ms. Patrick is the Managing Attorney for the Winchester office of Blue Ridge Legal Services, Inc. Her practice consists of civil law matters. She has been a substitute District Court Judge. Presently, she is a member of the Board of Directors of VWAA and is a Past President of that organization. She has been a member of the Virginia Bar since 1981.

Betsy Sue Scott, Attorney at Law: Ms. Scott is a principal of the Law Office of Betsy Sue Scott and has served as the President of the Loudoun Chapter of VWAA since 2011. She focuses her practice in the areas of export and trade compliance, wills, trusts, estates and guardianships/conservatorships. 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 Mary Grace O'Malley at (703) 257-9777, should you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely yours,



E. Kate Fitzgerald and Betsy Sue Scott  
Judicial Co-Chairs, Loudoun Chapter  
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures

cc: Jeanette A. Irby, Esquire  
William Atwell, Esquire  
Lorrie A. Sinclair, Esquire  
Steven E. Sincavage, Esquire  
Zaida C. Thompson, Esquire

## JEANETTE A. IRBY

Experience and Legal Ability: Jeanette 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, Ms. Irby was the managing partner of Family Law Center, P.C., a solo law practice focusing on domestic relations law in Michigan. At that time, Ms. Irby also accepted court-appointed criminal cases, handling both misdemeanor and felony offenses, appellate representation and bench and jury trials. In 1995, she moved to Fauquier County, Virginia, and was admitted to the Virginia Bar that same year. Ms. Irby is also 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 of Walker, Jones where her practice included domestic relations, civil and criminal cases. 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 2004, she became the Assistant County Attorney for Fauquier County, where she represented the County in both General District and Circuit Court on tax and zoning matters. 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. For three 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. 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, but has limited experience in trials to conclusion in courts of record during the past five years. 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, in her several legal positions in public service, 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**.

## WILLIAM (BILL) ATWILL

Experience and Legal Ability: Bill Atwill received his Juris Doctor from University of Richmond Law School in 1983 and earned his undergraduate degree from Virginia Military Institute in 1978. Between 1978 and 1981 Mr. Atwill was in the United States Navy, attaining the rank of lieutenant. He continued his military service in the U.S. Naval Reserves from 1981 to 2003, attaining the rank of captain. He has been a member of the Virginia Bar since 1984 and is also admitted to practice before the United States District and Bankruptcy Courts for the Eastern District of Virginia (1986), the District of Columbia Court of Appeals and the United States District Court for the District of Columbia (approx. 1985)

From 1984 to 1986 Mr. Atwill was with Cunningham and Associates. Thereafter he joined the firm of Hazel & Thomas (1986-2003). In 1993 he opened the Law Office of William Atwill and, beginning in 1995 he was a principal in Atwill, Troxell & Leigh, P.C. (formerly Atwill & Leigh P.C., Mims, Atwill & Leigh, P.C. and Worcester, Mims & Atwill P.C.) Throughout his legal career Mr. Atwill has maintained a civil law practice with an emphasis on construction law.

Mr. Atwill is an active member of the Virginia State Bar, serving on the State Bar Disciplinary Committee. From 2007 to 2010 he was the Chair of the 7<sup>th</sup> District's Disciplinary Sub-Committee; beginning in 2010, he has served as one of 16 attorneys on the State's Disciplinary Board. Since 1995 Mr. Atwill has served as a Commissioner of Chancery and has served as a Commissioner of Sale since 2008. He has been named a Civil Law Legal Elite (Virginia Business 2012) and was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal.

Mr. Atwill's civil and construction litigation occupy 60% of his practice, torts 20%, real estate 10% and trusts and estates and bankruptcy proceedings constituting the remaining 10%. Over the past five years, Mr. Atwill has tried between 5 and 10 cases to conclusion in a court of record, with 90% of those cases being bench trials.

He has handled several matters in the Supreme Court of Virginia, including oral argument in one case in 2012 and successfully opposing the granting of writs in two other matters.

As a Commissioner in Chancery for the Loudoun County Circuit Court, Mr. Atwill has conducted *ore tenus* hearings, receiving testimony from both lay and expert witnesses. Both in this capacity as well as in his work on the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board Mr. Atwill has authored reports and orders.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submission and interview, the committee determined that Mr. Atwill had the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a Circuit Court judge.

Professionalism and Impartiality: The committee is satisfied that Mr. Atwill would exercise the impartiality and professionalism required by a sitting judge.

Overall Evaluation: The committee was impressed with Mr. Atwill's depth of experience and expertise in civil litigation. His history, submission and interview demonstrate he displays many of the qualities desired in a jurist, including integrity, decisiveness, and judicial temperament. Mr. Atwill did not demonstrate significant experience with criminal law and domestic relations law, two issues that frequently come before the Circuit Court. The Committee found that his fairness, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, and integrity are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for the position of a circuit court judge and merits the designation of **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; guardian *ad litem* appointments for juveniles and incapacitated adults; and court-appointed criminal cases for misdemeanors, felonies, and juvenile matters. She was appointed as a substitute judge in 2011 and has served in Culpeper, Frederick, and Loudoun County Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court, and in the Loudoun County General District Court for civil, criminal, and traffic courtrooms. Ms. Sinclair was appointed as a Special Justice for civil commitments for the 2008-2014 term. In addition to her practice, she is a contractor at Pro-telligent, LLC where she teaches comparative law and contractor legal responsibilities to contractors 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 where she worked as an Associate Attorney at The Trade Mark Institute and then at a small 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 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 in criminal law and jury trials, from both the prosecution and defense perspective. Ms. Sinclair does not have experience in the areas of domestic relations law and more general civil litigation although she now is obtaining such experience through her service as Substitute Judge and Special Justice. Her commitment to and leadership of 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 merits the designation of **RECOMMENDED**.

## STEVEN E. SINCAVAGE

Steven Sincavage earned a Bachelor of Arts with High Distinction (1990) and his Juris Doctor (1993) from the University of Virginia. He has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1993.

While in law school, Mr. Sincavage clerked to the Honorable Thomas D. Horne and the Honorable James H. Chamblin of the Loudoun County Circuit Court. Beginning in the spring of 1994, Mr. Sincavage worked, first as a part-time and later as a full-time, clerk to this same court. Mr. Sincavage remained in that position until July 1, 1997 when he was appointed as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County

Mr. Sincavage has served as a member of the Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney's Office since 1997, first as an Assistant and later as a Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney.

Mr. Sincavage has been an active member of the Loudoun County Bar Association since 1997, serving as the Bar's Treasurer for two terms (2004-05 and 2007-08). Since 2008, he has been a member of the Bar's Circuit Court Bench-Bar Committee.

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Sincavage has served as a prosecutor for over fifteen (15) years. He regularly appears before the county's Circuit, General District and Juvenile & Domestic Relations Courts. By his estimation, Mr. Sincavage has tried approximately fifty (50) jury trials, with the majority of those cases being felony matters, and at least two hundred (200) bench trials (the majority of which were misdemeanor appeal trials) in the Circuit Court. In addition to his trial work, he regularly handles pleas, sentencing hearings and probation violation hearings before the Court.

In approximately 5% of his litigation, he represents the Commonwealth in civil matters such as asset forfeitures, expungement petitions, concealed handgun permits and suspensions, habitual offender declarations, bond forfeitures and involuntary commitment appeals.

He has written several briefs opposing criminal defendant petitions for appeal to the Virginia Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of Virginia.

From early 2004 to June 2012, Mr. Sincavage served as one of the Commonwealth Attorney Office's representatives to the Loudoun County Adult Drug Treatment Court Team.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submission and interview, the Committee determined that Mr. Sincavage had the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a Circuit Court judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: The committee is satisfied that Mr. Sincavage would exercise the impartiality and professionalism required by a sitting judge.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee is satisfied with the extent of Mr. Sincavage's fairness, intellect, temperament, professionalism, and integrity. The Committee was impressed with his

depth of experience in the field of criminal law and extensive participation in jury trials. Mr. Sincavage lacks experience in domestic relations law and general civil trial work. The Committee found that he meets the requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merits the designation of **QUALIFIED**.

## ZAIDA C. THOMPSON

Experience and Legal Ability: Zaida C. Thompson received her Juris Doctor degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology- Chicago Kent College of Law in 1993 after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1985 from Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois. She is a member of the Virginia Bar (1994) and is admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court.

Ms. Thompson is currently an Assistant County Attorney in the Office of the County Attorney in Loudoun County. She has served in this position since 2001. Prior to this, she was an Assistant County Attorney in Fairfax County from 1998 to 2001. Her preceding position was as Staff Attorney for Legal Services of Northern Virginia in Arlington, Virginia, from 1995 to 1998 and for *Servicios Hispanos* in Herndon, Virginia from 1994 to 1995. In 1994, she held temporary legal positions in Washington, D.C. and, while a law student, she worked as a law clerk at Urban & Stone, P.C., Chicago, Illinois, from 1991 to 1993. Other positions before joining the bar included her 1985-1989 work as a criminalist/forensic scientist in the Chicago Police Department in Chicago, Illinois.

Ms. Thompson practices primarily in civil matters such as government enforcement matters, collection, and land use issues. She also serves as Special Prosecutor in criminal matters relating to violations of ordinances and appears in General District Court and state courts of record. In addition to litigation for Loudoun County, she provides legal advice to department heads and county staff, drafts and reviews county ordinances and supervises and mentors junior Assistant County Attorneys.

Ms. Thompson served as Chair of the Virginia State Bar Lawyer Referral Committee, President of the Virginia Commission on Women and Minorities in the Legal System, the Bar Counsel Search Committee and the Seventh District Disciplinary Committee. She has contributed to the publication of the Virginia State Bar Annual Reports of Special Committees: *The Virginia Lawyer Referral Service* and has written for *El Sol* newspaper "Consejos Legales por Servicios Hispanos." Within the Loudoun County Bar Association, she has been a Board member and Parliamentarian and served as chair of the Judicial Qualifications Committee. She is a member of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association and is a founding member and past President of the Hispanic Bar Association of Virginia. Within the community, Ms. Thompson is a member of the Virginia Youth Soccer Association and the Leesburg Football Club. She has volunteered in her church's Child Development Enrichment Program and elementary-level programs.

Fairness and Temperament: Ms. Thompson has demonstrated to the Committee, through her submission and interview, that she has the requisite temperament expected of a Circuit Court judge. Ms. Thompson impressed the Committee with her concern for fairness and the Committee is satisfied that she would exhibit the fairness required by a sitting judge.

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

Overall Evaluation: The Committee is satisfied with the extent of Ms. Thompson's legal experience, her legal ability, her fairness and temperament, and professionalism and integrity. The Committee especially notes her career-long dedication to public service. Ms. Thompson has had minimal criminal law, domestic relations, and jury trial experience. The Committee finds that she meets the requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merits the designation of **QUALIFIED**.