



VIRGINIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

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April 8, 2018

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Via First Class Mail and Facsimile
The Honorable Mark Warner
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Fax: (202) 224-6295

Via First Class Mail and Facsimile
The Honorable Timothy Kaine
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Fax: (202) 228-6363

Re: Vacancy on the United States District Court for the
Western District of Virginia

Dear Senators Warner and Kaine:

On behalf of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association ("VWAA"), a judicial committee (the "Committee") was impaneled to evaluate candidates for a vacancy on the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, occasioned by the Honorable Glen Conrad's decision to take senior status.

The VWAA requested that interested candidates complete the VWAA Judicial Candidates Questionnaire (the "Application"), submit a short biography, and participate in an interview with the Committee. Prior to the interviews, members of the Committee contacted the references listed on each candidate's Application as well as other members of the local bar and legal community to inquire as to each candidate's suitability for the vacancy. On March 26, 2018, the Committee interviewed eleven (11) candidates.

It is worth noting that the VWAA ratings are based upon a review of each candidate's merits against published standards and guidelines, including the following: fairness, integrity, experience, intellect, temperament, professionalism, and pro bono service. Ratings

are not a function of a general vote by the VWAA membership, nor are they a comparison of candidates within the “pool” presented.

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 for Reviewing Qualifications for Judicial Office (“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 any applicant 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. 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 Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the VWAA has approved, in accordance with its procedures, the following endorsements of the Committee for this judicial vacancy:

The Honorable Robert S. Ballou is found *Highly Recommended*.
Julia C. Dudley is found *Highly Recommended*.

The Honorable David B. Carson is found *Recommended*.
The Honorable Pamela M. Sargent is found *Recommended*.
Melvin A. Williams is found *Recommended*.
The Honorable Victoria A. B. Willis is found *Recommended*.

David Barger is found *Qualified*.
Delegate Gregory D. Habeeb is found *Qualified*.
Representative Robert Hurt is found *Qualified*.
The Honorable John C. Kilgore is found *Qualified*.
Patricia Nagel 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 as follows:

Lisa S. Brook: Ms. Brook practices plaintiff's litigation with the law firm of MichieHamlett in Charlottesville, Virginia. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1993, and serves on the Leadership Committee of the Women's Caucus of the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association, and the Leadership Summit Committee of the Women Trial Lawyers Caucus of the American Association for Justice. She is admitted to practice in the United States District Courts for the Eastern and Western Districts of Virginia.

Lauren E. Davis: Ms. Davis is a partner with Frith Ellerman & Davis Law Firm, PC. She focuses her practice on plaintiff's litigation, particularly in the areas of medical malpractice and nursing home neglect and abuse. Ms. Davis regularly practices in the Western District of Virginia and has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2007.

Kristi C. Kelly: Mrs. Kelly is a partner at the law firm of Kelly & Crandall, PLC. She focuses her practice on consumer rights litigation, including credit reporting errors, mortgage servicing abuses and predatory lending, throughout the Eastern District of Virginia. She was previously a shareholder at Surovell Isaacs Petersen & Levy, PLC and an attorney at Legal Services of Northern Virginia. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2006.

Michelle Parker: Ms. Parker is with The Decker Law Firm in Norfolk, VA. She primarily practices in the areas of personal injury, civil litigation, and Wills, Trusts and Estates. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2004. She is admitted to practice in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. She is currently the President of VWAA and was recently installed on the Executive Committee of The James Kent American Inn of Court.

Leigh Strelka: Mrs. Strelka is a partner at the Strelka Law Office, PC. She focuses her practice on employment law claims originating from age discrimination, race discrimination, discrimination based upon an employee's disability, unpaid wages and overtime compensation, and sexual harassment. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2006.

Nancy F. Reynolds: Ms. Reynolds is a member of LeClairRyan, PLLC. She focuses her practice on medical malpractice law. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1995 and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Roanoke Chapter of the VWAA and its Committee Chair on Judicial Selection. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Roanoke Bar Association and the Ted Dalton American Inn of Court.

Johneal White: Ms. White is a partner at the law firm of Glenn Robinson Cathey Memmer & Skaff in Roanoke, Virginia. She is a practiced trial lawyer, having represented individuals, companies, and local governments in a variety of litigation matters in both state and federal courts, including appeals. Ms. White regularly litigates personal injury cases, insurance coverage matters, and employment law disputes. She was admitted to the Virginia State Bar in 2007 and the Massachusetts State Bar in 2005.

Kathleen L. Wright: Ms. Wright, a partner at the Gentry Locke law firm in Roanoke, Virginia, practices general commercial litigation with a focus on local government law and property rights issues. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2002.¹

¹ Note: Due to a personal conflict, she did not participate in the rating of Gregory Habeeb.

We hope that this information will prove helpful to you during your review process for this very important judicial position. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or need additional information.

Cordially yours,



Michelle Parker

President

Virginia Women Attorneys Association



Kristi C. Kelly

Chair, Judicial Committee

Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures: Executive Summary of the Honorable Robert S. Ballou
 Executive Summary of David Barger
 Executive Summary of the Honorable David B. Carson
 Executive Summary of Julia C. Dudley
 Executive Summary of Delegate Gregory D. Habeeb
 Executive Summary of Representative Robert Hurt
 Executive Summary of the Honorable John C. Kilgore
 Executive Summary of Patricia Nagel
 Executive Summary of the Honorable Pamela M. Sargent
 Executive Summary of Melvin A. Williams
 Executive Summary of the Honorable Victoria A. B. Willis

cc (by email only): Hon. Robert S. Ballou
 David Barger
 Hon. David B. Carson
 Julia C. Dudley
 Del. Gregory D. Habeeb
 Rep. Robert Hurt
 Hon. John C. Kilgore
 Patricia Nagel
 Hon. Pamela M. Sargent
 Melvin A. Williams
 Hon. Victoria A. B. Willis

THE HONORABLE ROBERT STEWART BALLOU

Experience and Legal Ability: The Honorable Robert S. Ballou earned both a Bachelor of Arts degree in American Government and Economics and his Juris Doctor degree at the University of Virginia. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1987.

Since 2011, Judge Ballou has served as a Magistrate Judge in the United States District Court of the Western District of Virginia. Prior to his appointment as Magistrate Judge, Judge Ballou practiced law at the Roanoke, Virginia law firm of Johnson, Ayers & Matthews, PLC, where he developed a litigation practice focused on tort defense, with a specialty in construction disputes.

Judge Ballou began his legal career in 1987 as a Law Clerk to Judge Peter H. Beer in the federal district court in the Eastern District of Louisiana. From 1988 to 1992, Judge Ballou worked in Richmond as an Associate Attorney at Christian, Barton, Epps, Brent & Chappell before moving to Roanoke and joining Johnson, Ayers & Matthews. He practiced there for more than 19 years until his judicial appointment in 2011. Over the course of his career, he has tried, settled, judged, or mediated many civil and criminal disputes. He has a reputation as a lawyer and judge for preparation, accurate legal analysis, and the cordial treatment of counsel and parties.

Throughout his career, Judge Ballou has devoted a significant amount of time to the legal and local communities. As an active member of the Virginia State Bar, he served on the VSB Executive Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, and other special committees. He continued his VSB participation as a judicial representative for the Construction and Criminal Law sections. He served on the board of the Virginia Law Foundation and as a member of both the Virginia Model Jury Instruction Committee and the Boyd-Graves Conference. Judge Ballou has taught trial skills and professionalism courses for the National Trial Advocacy Institute for Virginia, the Virginia State Bar, the Virginia Association of Defense Attorneys, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and the Federal Bar Association, among others. His guest speaking appearances include events at the University of Virginia School of Law, Washington and Lee School of Law and the Ted Dalton Inn of Court. Judge Ballou regularly teaches Rule of Law classes, programs explaining the risks of drug abuse, and other courses designed for local school children and Boy Scout troops. He serves and has served on the boards of various community charitable organizations.

Fairness and Temperament: Judge Ballou has demonstrated to the Committee, through his materials, by interview and by reputation, a strong interest in the fair application of the law and the temperament appropriate to service as a United States District Court judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Judge Ballou has consistently acted with the professionalism and integrity essential for a judge in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge Ballou is especially well-qualified for the position of United States District Court Judge for the Western District of Virginia. The Committee has no hesitation in its special recommendation and rating of **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

DAVID GLENN BARGER

Experience and Legal Ability: David Glenn Barger earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Maryland, School of Law. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1982.

Since 2009, Mr. Barger has been the Chair of the Litigation Group at Greenberg Traurig, LLP. His practice involves a variety of criminal and civil work. As Chair, he also mentors the more junior lawyers.

Mr. Barger began his legal career in 1982 as a solo practitioner and performed a significant amount of criminal pro bono work as a court-appointed attorney. Mr. Barger also taught as an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Law at James Madison University from 1981 through 1984. He was then an attorney for the United States Department of Justice from 1984 through 2000, first in the Tax Division and then in the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, Fraud Section.

Throughout his career, Mr. Barger has devoted a significant amount of time to the legal community. He has been an active member of the Virginia State Bar, the District of Columbia Bar, and the Maryland State Bar. He has served on the panel for Blue Ridge Legal Services. Additionally, Mr. Barger serves on a Service Pro Bono Project created by the Supreme Court of Virginia. Mr. Barger shared little in the way of any community/public service. Mr. Barger is an adjunct faculty member at Catholic University, Columbus School Law, where he has taught criminal trial practice for approximately 20 years. In the past, Mr. Barger was a frequent lecturer for the Criminal Law Section of the Virginia State Bar and the Department of Justice. Mr. Barger has lived and worked in areas other than the Western District of Virginia for the majority of his career and his ties to this district and related bar associations are limited.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions and interview, Mr. Barger has demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Mr. Barger possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. Barger meets the minimum requirements for the position of a United States District Court Judge for the Western District of Virginia. He warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

THE HONORABLE DAVID B. CARSON

Experience and Legal Ability: Judge David B. Carson earned his Juris Doctor from Washington and Lee University School of Law, graduating *cum laude* in 1988. He was licensed in Virginia in 1990. He served as a law clerk in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia for the Honorable Jackson L. Kiser from 1988-89.

Judge Carson began his practice of law as an associate attorney with Johnson, Ayers & Matthews in Roanoke, VA. While in private practice, he primarily litigated civil cases with an emphasis on defense. Later in his private practice, he represented plaintiffs in personal injury cases, handled family law cases and served as an arbitrator or mediator in several cases. During his time in private practice, Judge Carson was also the Chair of the Roanoke City School Board (2005-2013) and the Chair of the Roanoke Valley Governor's School Board (2010-2013). While acting as Chair of the Roanoke City School Board, the graduation rate increased from 55.81% to 80.3%, the Roanoke City Community College Access Program was developed, and Forest Park Academy opened providing over-age and/or under-credited students an avenue to graduate high school. Judge Carson continues his efforts to provide education by teaching several legal courses at Roanoke College, University of Virginia and Washington and Lee University School of Law.

Judge Carson was appointed as a Circuit Court Judge for the Twenty-Third Judicial Circuit of Virginia in 2013, where he continues to serve. Judge Carson hears a full range of civil and criminal cases. Judge Carson's experience over the past twenty-eight years has been primarily in the state court system and has been exclusively in the state court system over the past five years.

Fairness and Temperament: During his interview and from the information gathered on Judge Carson, he has demonstrated over time a respect for the judicial process and the role of the court, stating that as a judge he knows he is there for the litigants and not the other way around. He also demonstrates an ability to evaluate and assess while respecting the perspectives of others, he has a concern for access to education regardless of race, sex or socio-economic status, and he has implemented procedures to allow underserved populations access to justice. Judge Carson possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: During his interview and from the information gathered, Judge Carson presented or was described as thoughtful, dedicated, and a compassionate administrator of justice. He was presented with "Key to the City of Roanoke" in 2013 and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drum Major for Justice Award in 2011. He has displayed his leadership acumen in his roles as Judge and as Chair of the Roanoke City School Board. The Committee finds that Judge Carson possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge David B. Carson is well-qualified for the position of District Court Judge of the United States District Court for Western District of Virginia and is pleased to recognize him as **RECOMMENDED**.

JULIA CAMPBELL DUDLEY

Experience and Legal Ability: Julia Campbell Dudley earned her Juris Doctor from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia in 1985 and became licensed in Virginia in 1985. She served as a law clerk for the Honorable Glen M. Williams and a pro se law clerk in the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Ms. Dudley began her practice of law as an Assistant United States Attorney in 1988 and remained with the United States Attorney's office until May 2010. She was a trial attorney in numerous complex civil matters and was the Civil Chief of the United States Attorney's Office for eight years. Her litigation skills resulted in several awards and frequent recognition from her federal coworkers and clients, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Federal Highway Administration. In 1999, she earned the United States Justice Department's Director's Award for Superior Performance as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for her prosecution of an organized crime case. In 2009, Ms. Dudley was appointed United States Attorney of the Western District of Virginia, and served there more than a year prior to her appointment as Clerk of the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Ms. Dudley has been the United States District Court Clerk for the Western District of Virginia from 2010 to the present. In that role, she has served on the Criminal Justice Act Advisory Committee and the Local Rules Committee and has managed the administrative support for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Fairness and Temperament: During her interview and from the information gathered on Ms. Dudley, she has demonstrated over time a respect for the judicial process and the role of the court, an ability to evaluate and assess while respecting the perspectives of others and a concern for access to justice by underserved populations. Ms. Dudley possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: During her interview and from the information gathered, Ms. Dudley presented or was described as even-tempered and always prepared. She has displayed her leadership acumen in her role as Clerk of Court and in her community activities. The Committee finds that Ms. Dudley possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Julia Campbell Dudley is especially well-qualified for the position of District Court Judge of the United States District Court for Western District of Virginia and is pleased to recognize her as **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

THE HONORABLE GREGORY D. HABEEB

Experience and Legal Ability: Delegate Gregory Habeeb earned both his undergraduate and Juris Doctor degrees from Wake Forest University. He was admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2001.

Del. Habeeb began his legal career at Williams Mullen, P.C., where he focused on commercial litigation. He joined Gentry Locke, LLP, in 2004, where he is a litigation partner. His practice is focused on complex commercial litigation and catastrophic injury cases including products liability, wrongful death and traumatic brain injury.

Del. Habeeb's legal acumen has been recognized by the Blue Ridge Business Journal as a "20 Business Leaders Under 40" list, American Lawyer Media Top Lawyer, Virginia Lawyers Weekly "Leader in the Law", Virginia Business Magazine Legal Elite and Virginia Super Lawyer Rising Star. In 2011, Del. Habeeb was elected by the 8th District to serve in the Virginia House of Delegates. In this role, which he currently holds, Del. Habeeb, was recommended for this vacancy by approximately fifty members of the Virginia Senate and House of Delegates from both his Republican and Democrat peers.

In addition to his service in the Virginia General Assembly, Del. Habeeb shows his dedication to the community by volunteering with Military Family Support Center and Blue Ridge Legal Services. Previously, he has served on the Board of Directors of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Virginia Board of Directors. Del. Habeeb is a member of the Roanoke Bar Association, Virginia Trial Lawyers Association and Boyd-Graves Conference.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions and interview, Del. Habeeb demonstrated that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Del. Habeeb possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Del. Habeeb meets the minimum requirements for the position of a District Court Judge for the Western District of Virginia. He warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

THE HONORABLE ROBERT HURT

Experience and Legal Ability: Representative Hurt earned his Juris Doctor from the Mississippi College School of Law in 1995. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1995.

Rep. Hurt most recently represented Virginia's Fifth District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Prior to that, Rep. Hurt served on the Chatham Town Council, the Virginia House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate. Rep. Hurt previously practiced law in Chatham (Pittsylvania County) as a solo practitioner, in the law office of H. Victor Millner, Jr., PC, and as Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney. Rep. Hurt's practice focused on litigation in criminal and civil cases in state court.

Rep. Hurt helped establish the Center for Law and Government at Liberty University, where he is the current Vice President and Director. He also frequently serves as a guest lecturer at the Liberty University School of Law and at Liberty University's Helms School of Government. Rep. Hurt enjoys speaking to students about government and politics and has visited numerous universities, colleges, and high schools.

Rep. Hurt is an active member of the Virginia State Bar, the Virginia Bar Association, and is a past president of the Pittsylvania County Bar Association. In addition, he has served on numerous boards and committees during his time with the Virginia General Assembly and U.S. House of Representatives. While Rep. Hurt's political background is impressive, he has a limited connection to the Western District of Virginia and stated he rarely appeared in federal court.

Fairness and Temperament: Throughout the application and interview process, Rep. Hurt demonstrated that he generally possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, though he did interrupt the Committee members as questions were being asked of him.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Rep. Hurt generally possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. However, of concern to the Committee was Rep. Hurt's opinion that there is no systemic racial bias in the criminal justice system.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Rep. Hurt meets the minimum requirements for the position of a District Court Judge for the Western District of Virginia. He warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED.**

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. KILGORE

Experience and Legal Ability: The Honorable John C. Kilgore earned his Juris Doctor from T.C. Williams School of Law and was licensed to practice in Virginia in 1994. He served as a law clerk for The Honorable Glen M. Williams in the Western District of Virginia from 1994-1995.

Judge Kilgore maintained a private practice of law from 1995 to 2000, while also working part time as a Scott County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney and was elected full time to the Commonwealth's Attorney position in 2000. Judge Kilgore was the Commonwealth's Attorney until 2003, when he was appointed as a judge to the Thirtieth Judicial Circuit Court of Virginia. Judge Kilgore founded and sits on drug court for minors in his jurisdiction and is acutely aware of the mental health and drug addiction issues within his locality. Judge Kilgore's experience over the past twenty-three years has been primarily in the state court system and has been exclusively in the state court system over the past eighteen years. During the interview, he did not appreciate the importance of e-discovery issues in federal practice.

Fairness and Temperament: Through the interview and information gathered, Judge Kilgore's demeanor on the bench and preparedness were matters of concern. He also indicated a primary focus on the needs of his locality.

Professionalism and Integrity: Through the interview and information gathered, Judge Kilgore indicated a level of professionalism and integrity sufficient for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge Kilgore meets the minimum requirements or basic criteria for the position of the United States District Judge for the Western District of Virginia and warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

PATRICIA PALMER NAGEL

Experience and Legal Ability: Patricia Palmer Nagel earned her Juris Doctor from University of San Francisco School of Law in 1990 and was licensed to practice in Virginia in 1995 after working in California for several years.

Ms. Nagel served as an assistant public defender with the Indigent Defense Commission from 1995-2001 and again from 2008-2009, where she was promoted after a year to supervise the appellate division, which included developing appellate policies and procedures and training appellate attorneys. Ms. Nagel has spent the rest of her professional career as a solo practitioner in Williamsburg, Virginia. She has extensive experience in appellate practice and procedure and also handles civil and criminal matters at the trial level. She was not familiar with e-discovery issues in federal practice and has no connection with the Western District of Virginia.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions and interview, Ms. Nagel demonstrated that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: Through the interview and information gathered, Ms. Nagel indicated a level of professionalism and integrity sufficient for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Nagel meets the minimum requirements or basic criteria for the position of the United States District Judge for the Western District of Virginia and warrants the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

THE HONORABLE PAMELA MEADE SARGENT

Experience and Legal Ability: Judge Sargent graduated *Cum Laude* from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1988 and was admitted to the Virginia State Bar the same year. Following a clerkship with the Honorable H.E. Widener, Jr., in the United States Court of Appeals of the Fourth Circuit, Abingdon, Virginia, Judge Sargent practiced law with the law firm of White, Bundy, McElroy, Hodges & Sargent, as an associate from 1989 through 1994, and as a principle of the firm from 1994 through December 1997, when she took the bench as a Magistrate Judge.

Judge Sargent has served as a Magistrate Judge for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia for over 20 years, from December 1997 to the present. Throughout Judge Sargent's extensive judicial experience, she has handled a demanding civil and criminal docket involving complex legal and factual issues. Judge Sargent has presided over complex civil matters, conducting hearings on constitutional issues; issuing decisions, reports and recommendations; and coordinating settlement conferences.

Judge Sargent has published 53 opinions. She has been a faculty member of the Virginia State Bar Professionalism Course from 1999 to 2001, a member of the Board of Governors of the Virginia State Bar Section on the Education of Lawyers in Virginia from 2000 to 2006 and 2012 to the present, and a member of organizations, including the Western District Judicial Committee from 1995 to 1997, a member of the Judicial Section Council from 2003 to 2008, a judicial representative to the Board of Governors from 2004 to 2007, and a member of the Community Service Program Council.

Judge Sargent has served as a Commissioner on the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws from 1994 to 2003, appointed initially by Governor George Allen in 1994 and reappointed by Governor Jim Gilmore. Judge Sargent was appointed by the Supreme Court of Virginia as a member of the Character and Fitness Committee of the Virginia Board of Bar Examiners from 1995 to 1997, and was appointed by Governor George Allen as a member of the Commonwealth of Virginia Board of Medical Assistance Services.

Fairness and Temperament: Through the interview and from the information gathered, Judge Sargent demonstrates a respect for the judicial process and the role of the court. She values consistency and seeks to foster respect for the legal system by applying justice evenly, while retaining compassion for the underserved in the community. She did indicate a primary focus on the needs of her locality. Judge Sargent demonstrates the requisite fairness and temperament for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: Judge Sargent is principled and has a thorough knowledge of the law. In light of the challenges to the community from the opioid epidemic, Judge Sargent presides over the Abingdon Division Re-entry Court in an effort to assist offenders with a successful transition upon release from incarceration. The Committee finds that Judge Sargent possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge Pamela Meade Sargent is well-qualified for the position of District Court Judge of the United States District Court for Western District of Virginia and warrants the Committee's rating as **RECOMMENDED**.

MELVIN A. WILLIAMS

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Williams graduated from the Marshall-Wythe School of Law at The College of William and Mary in 1998 and was admitted to the Virginia State Bar the same year. He began his career with the Bedford Commonwealth Attorney's office, where he was initially assigned to the Southern Virginia Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force and later was an assistant commonwealth's attorney.

Mr. Williams was an associate at the firms of Gynn & Memmer and Johnson Ayers & Mathews, where he focused on representing defendants in civil actions. He subsequently represented plaintiffs in civil actions at the firm of Grimes & Williams and currently at his own firm, Mel Williams PLC. He has a solid background in both criminal and civil practice. In the civil context, he has represented both plaintiffs and defendants. Mr. Williams has nearly 20 years of experience in both the state and federal courts of Virginia.

Mr. Williams' published cases show that he is knowledgeable about many of the issues faced in Federal Courts. He has successfully handled many jury trials and appeals in both state and federal court. The letters of recommendation make clear that he has been willing to share his expertise in federal court with colleagues who may be less practiced in the venue.

Fairness and Temperament: In his interview, Mr. Williams demonstrated an approachable and open demeanor. He was candid and forthright in assessing his own strengths and weaknesses. He acknowledged problems in the justice system surrounding the treatment of women and minorities, which he has addressed through his work history and discussed during the interview. He has represented many litigants in federal court in employment and constitutional issues. Through his submissions and interview, Mr. Williams has demonstrated that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Mr. Williams possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. He has devoted himself to many civic issues in the name of community improvement. Mr. Williams demonstrated thoughtful consideration of his personal perspectives and their inapplicability to the fair application of the law.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. Williams exceeds the minimum requirements for the position of a United States District Court Judge for the Western District of Virginia. He exhibited a calm, respectful demeanor and a willingness to listen. He warrants the Committee's rating of **RECOMMENDED**.

THE HONORABLE VICTORIA A. B. WILLIS

Experience and Legal Ability: Judge Willis earned her law degree from T.C. Williams School of Law in 1986 and was licensed to practice law the same year. She clerked for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia from 1986 to 1988.

Judge Willis has worked in private practice at various firms in Fredericksburg and Richmond. She also worked in-house for a health system, rising to General Counsel and Vice President before returning to private practice in 2001. She was appointed as a judge for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit on December 1, 2014, where she currently sits. Judge Willis has served as faculty for various organizations, including judicial training for new judges on how to conduct jury trials. Since her appointment to the bench, she has embraced a leadership role, including a push to institute a drug court, while also maintaining her previous workload.

Fairness and Temperament: Through the interview and from the information gathered, Judge Willis demonstrates a respect for the judicial process and the role of the court. She values the jury system and embraces her role in helping litigants before her to appreciate and understand the process. Judge Willis expressed her observations about how the justice system can provide those of diverse backgrounds with the same opportunities and responsibilities under the law. Judge Willis demonstrates the requisite fairness and temperament for a judge of the Western District of Virginia.

Professionalism and Integrity: Through the interview and information gathered, Judge Willis indicated a level of professionalism and integrity sufficient for the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. That professionalism extends to her sense of responsibility to all litigants, including those of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds Judge Victoria A. B. Willis is well-qualified for the position of District Court Judge of the United States District Court for Western District of Virginia and warrants the Committee's rating as **RECOMMENDED**.