



VIRGINIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

Sender's Phone No.: 540-387-2320
Sender's Email.: susanw@guynnwaddell.com

January 13, 2016

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POST OFFICE BOX 3806
MERRIFIELD, VIRGINIA 22116-3806
PHONE: 804-282-6363
www.VWAA.org

E-Mail: VWAA@live.com

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL AND FACSIMILE

The Honorable Terry McAuliffe
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Co-Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Senate
P.O. Box 6205
Williamsburg, VA 23188

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL

The Honorable Mark D. Obenshain
Co-Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Senate
P.O. Box 555
Harrisonburg, VA 22803

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL AND EMAIL

The Honorable David T. Albo
Chair, Courts of Justice
House of Delegates
6367 Rolling Mill Place, Suite 102
Springfield, VA 22152

Re: Vacancy in the 23rd Judicial Circuit

Dear Governor McAuliffe, Senator Norment, Senator Obenshain, and Delegate Albo:

On behalf of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association ("VWAA"), a regional committee ("the Committee") was impaneled to evaluate candidates for one (1) present vacancy on the 23rd Judicial Circuit occasioned by the retirement of the Honorable Clifford R. Weckstein.

The VWAA requested that interested candidates complete the VWAA Judicial Questionnaire (the "Application"), submit a short biography, and participate in an oral interview with the Committee. On December 30, 2015, the Committee interviewed three (3) candidates.

It is worth noting that the VWAA rates 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.

(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 to 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 Leisa K. Ciaffone is found *highly recommended*.

The Honorable J. Christopher Clemens is found *highly recommended*.

Neil A. Horn, Esquire, is found *recommended*.

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:

Nanda E. Davis is a solo practitioner in Roanoke, Virginia. She focuses her practice on criminal defense and domestic relations. She handles adult and juvenile matters, misdemeanors, felonies, probation violations, and protective orders, as well as custody, divorce, and child support. She regularly practices in all courts in the 23rd Judicial Circuit, as well as the surrounding counties. Before moving to Roanoke, Ms. Davis was an attorney adviser at the United States Department of Labor, Office of Administrative Law Judges, in Washington, D.C. She passed the Virginia State Bar in 2012.

Lauren E. Davis is a partner with Frith & Ellerman Law Firm, PC. She focuses her practice on plaintiff's medical malpractice. Before joining Frith & Ellerman, Ms. Davis served as a career law clerk to the Honorable Samuel G. Wilson, United States District Judge for the Western District of Virginia, and formerly worked at the law firm of Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, LLP. Ms. Davis has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2007.

Amanda E. Shaw practices law at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, P.C. Her practice focuses on plaintiff's medical malpractice and personal injury litigation. Prior to joining Gentry Locke she enjoyed a general civil practice at Glenn Feldman Darby & Goodlatte. Prior to that she practiced as a public defender for 12 years, including 7 years in the City of Roanoke. Ms. Shaw has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1996.

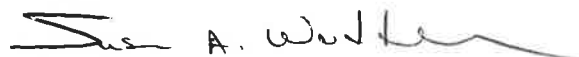
Susan A. Waddell, Committee Chair, is a partner at Guynn & Waddell, P.C. in Salem, Virginia. She has a varied practice that includes representation of plaintiffs in employee benefit claims, disability benefit claims, and contract claims. She also represents defendants in personal injury claims with a particular focus on complex claims and she represents local governments including the City of Covington, Virginia and the New River Resource Authority. She was formerly a partner at the firm of Wooten & Hart, P.C. in Roanoke and has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 1984.

Johneal M. White is a partner at Glenn Robinson & Cathey, PLC in Roanoke, Virginia. She focuses her practice on a variety of civil litigation, primarily defense but also complex plaintiff cases as well. She regularly practices in Circuit Courts and United States District Courts across the Commonwealth. Before moving to Roanoke, Ms. White was Counsel for the Committee on Education for the Massachusetts General Court. She was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar in 2005 and the Virginia Bar in 2007.

All members of the Committee practice regularly in the Circuit Courts in Roanoke City, Roanoke County, and the City of Salem.

We hope that this information will prove helpful to you during your selection process for these very important judicial positions. Please feel free to contact VWAA President Betsy Sue Scott should you have any questions or need additional information.

Respectfully yours,



Susan A. Waddell
Judicial Chair, Roanoke Chapter
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

VWAA Judicial Screening

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Enclosures: Executive Summary of the Honorable Leisa K. Ciaffone
Executive Summary of the Honorable J. Christopher Clemens
Executive Summary of Neil A. Horn, Esquire

cc: (by email only):

Senator John Edwards
Senator Stephen Newman
Delegate Sam Rasoul
Delegate Gregory Habeeb

The Honorable J. Christopher Clemens
The Honorable Leisa K. Ciaffone
Neil A. Horne, Esq.

Betsy Sue Scott, Esquire, VWAA President
Chandra Lantz, Esquire, Co-Chair of VWAA's Judiciary Committee
Devon Slovensky, Esquire, VWAA Roanoke Chapter, President

LEISA K. CIAFFONE

Experience and Legal Ability: Judge Ciaffone earned her Juris Doctor Degree from the T.C. Williams School of Law at Richmond University in 1987. She was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1987.

From 1987 to 2000, Judge Ciaffone practiced in Roanoke at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore working on a wide variety of cases from insurance defense (auto, premises, and products liability) to plaintiff's personal injury, from the small to the catastrophic. She was the firm's appellate manager from 1996 to 2000, handling approximately 65 appeals to the Virginia Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Bankruptcy Appeals and the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. On January 1, 2001 she opened her own law firm, Leisa K. Ciaffone, P.C. in Salem, Virginia. The majority of her work involved domestic relations matters including divorce and child custody, and she served as Guardian *ad Litem* for children. She also continued her work on a various civil matters, continuing to try jury trials in Circuit Court.

Throughout her career Judge Ciaffone has handled a multitude of *pro bono* matters, including an appeal in a Legal Aid divorce case to the Virginia Court of Appeals. After opening her solo practice in 2001 she continued to handle routine domestic relations matter on referral from the Legal Aid Society of Roanoke Valley.

Judge Ciaffone began her term as Judge on the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court on July 1, 2013, after serving as a substitute Judge since 2002. She has also served as a Circuit Court Judge *pro tempore* at the request of several Circuit Courts in divorce matters.

Prior to taking the bench in 2013, Judge Ciaffone served in several capacities in service to the bar, including the Virginia State Bar Council, Virginia State Bar Family Law Section Board of Governors, the Judicial Council of Virginia, President of the Roanoke County Bar Association, and a Virginia Board of Bar Examiners Grader. Since becoming a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judge she has continued serving the bar as a member of Association of District Court Judges of Virginia, Virginia Association of Women Judges, Virginia Council of Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court Judges, and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submissions and interview, Judge Ciaffone demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the Circuit Court.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds Judge Ciaffone possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the Circuit Court.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge Ciaffone is especially well-qualified for the position and merits special recommendation. She warrants the Committee's rating of Highly Recommended.

JOHN CHRISTOPHER CLEMENS

Experience and Legal Ability: Judge Clemens earned his Juris Doctor Degree from the T.C. Williams School of Law at Richmond University in 1990. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1990.

Judge Clemens began his career in private practice. From 1991 to 1996, he practiced at Gentry Locke Rakes & Moore, LLP. He practiced from 1996 to 1998 at Guynn & Clemens, P.C. and then at Clemens & Clemens, P.C. from 1998 to 2008. Judge Clemens' private practice included domestic relations, personal injury, criminal defense, and serving as guardian *ad litem* for children. Judge Clemens was also elected and served on the Salem City Council from 2004 to 2008.

Judge Clemens currently serves as a General District Court Judge for the 23rd Judicial Circuit and has done so since May 22, 2008 when he was appointed by the Circuit Court. He was elected to the position by the General Assembly in 2009 and re-elected by the General Assembly on February 1, 2015. He presides over approximately 20,000 cases a year including traffic, civil, and criminal proceedings.

Judge Clemens has continued serving the bar as a member of Association of District Court Judges of Virginia, the Virginia Bar Association, the Roanoke Bar Association, and the Salem/Roanoke County Bar Association.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions and interview, Judge Clemens demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the Circuit Court.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds Judge Clemens possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the Circuit Court.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Judge Clemens is especially well-qualified for the position and merits special recommendation. He warrants the Committee's rating of Highly Recommended.

NEIL ANDERSON HORN

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Horn earned his Juris Doctor Degree from Wake Forest University School of Law in 1997. He was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1997.

Mr. Horn opened his own law firm, Neil Horn, P.C., in 2004. He currently focuses his practice on criminal and traffic defense. Mr. Horn's practice also includes child protective orders, child removals, Department of Child Support Enforcement cases, expungements, and firearm rights restorations. Mr. Horn has previously handled other civil cases, including domestic and personal injury cases. His experience at the appellate level includes cases in the Virginia Court of Appeals and the Virginia Supreme Court.

In 2013, Mr. Horn was appointed to serve as a substitute judge. He has presided over cases in in the General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts in Roanoke City, Roanoke County, the City of Salem, Augusta County, Franklin County, and Montgomery County. Prior to opening his own firm, Mr. Horn was an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney for Roanoke City and was the Chief Regional Drug Prosecutor from 2001 through 2004. Over the course of his career, Mr. Horn has handled many serious felony cases in state and federal court, including over thirty jury trials.

Mr. Horn represents numerous indigent clients by serving as court appointed counsel in local courts. He is a member of the Roanoke Bar Association, the Virginia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. In 2004, Mr. Horn served as an adjunct faculty member at Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke, Virginia. His interests also include his memberships in the National Rifle Association, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Safari Club International.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submissions and interview, Mr. Horn has demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament for the Circuit Court.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Mr. Horn possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the Circuit Court.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Mr. Horn's qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for the position of a Circuit Court judge and merit the affirmative recommendation. He warrants the Committee's rating of Recommended.