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December 20, 2019

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & FACSIMILE:

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & EMAIL:

Senator Mark D. Obenshain
Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Senate of Virginia
Pocahontas Building, Room E502
P.O. Box 396
Richmond, Virginia 23219
district26@senate.virginia.gov

VIA FIRST-CLASS MAIL & EMAIL:

Representative Robert B. Bell
Chair, Courts of Justice Committee
Virginia House of Delegates
Pocahontas Building, Room E311
900 E. Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
DeIRBell@house.virginia.gov

**Re: Two Vacancies in the 20th Judicial Circuit of Virginia,
Loudoun County General District Court**

Dear Governor Northam, Senator Obenshain, and Representative Bell:

On behalf of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association ("VWAA"), a regional committee (the "Committee") was impaneled to evaluate candidates for the two vacancies in the 20th Judicial Circuit of Virginia, Loudoun County General District Court.

The VWAA requested that interested candidates complete the VWAA Judicial Candidates Questionnaire (the "Application") and participate in an interview with the Committee. On December 2, 2019, the Committee interviewed the candidates.

It is worth noting that the VWAA's 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.
- (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. 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 these judicial vacancies:

Lorrie A. Sinclair Taylor is found *highly recommended*
Matthew P. Snow is found *highly recommended*

Elizabeth Jean Lancaster is found *recommended*

Peter Thomas Hanson is found *qualified*
Alejandra Rueda is found *qualified*
Zaida Cordero Thompson is found *qualified*
Maria Nicole Wittmann 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:

Li-Shann Durst: Ms. Durst is the principal of the Law Office of Li-Shann Durst, PLLC located in Loudoun County. She graduated *cum laude* from California State University, Long Beach with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business and obtained her Juris Doctor from George Mason University School of Law in 2000. Her practice focuses on family law with special emphasis on alternative dispute resolution using collaborative practice and mediation. She is a member of the Loudoun County Bar Association and served as President of the Loudoun Chapter of the VWAA for the 2016-18 terms.

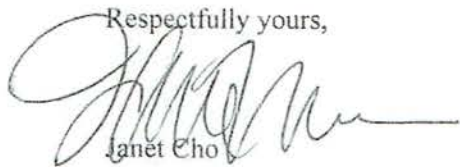
Marie Johnson: Ms. Johnson is a partner with JPS Law, PLLC in Vienna, Virginia. Ms. Johnson practices real property, business, collections/creditor's rights, civil/commercial litigation, and community association law. Ms. Johnson is admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia. Ms. Johnson has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2006.

Laurie Forbes Neff: Ms. Neff is a partner with the Geller Law Group, PLLC. Her practice is focused in the area of family and domestic relations law, including divorce, child custody and visitation, support, adoption, assisted reproduction and equitable distribution matters. Prior to re-entering private practice in 2016, she was a Clinical Professor of Law at the Scalia School of Law where, since 2011, she was the Managing Attorney and Director of the Mason Veterans and Servicemembers Legal Clinic. Ms. Neff has been a member of the Virginia State Bar since 2001.

Elizabeth Pendzich: Ms. Pendzich is the principal of the Law Office of Elizabeth Pendzich, P.C. located in Leesburg, Virginia. She graduated *cum laude* from Georgetown University and from Loyola Law School in Chicago. Ms. Pendzich's practice focuses on elder and estate law, including serving as guardian *ad litem* for incapacitated adults. She also practiced family law in all of its facets for many years. She served several terms as Secretary of the Loudoun County Bar Association, served two terms as President of the Loudoun Chapter of the VWAA, and has served on various committees of the Virginia State Bar.

We hope that this information will prove helpful to you during your selection process for these very important judicial positions.

Respectfully yours,



Janet Cho
President
Virginia Women Attorneys Association



Elizabeth Pendzich
Chair, Loudoun Judicial Evaluation Committee
Virginia Women Attorneys Association

Enclosures: Executive Summary of Peter Thomas Hansen
 Executive Summary of Elizabeth Jean Lancaster
 Executive Summary of Alejandra Rueda
 Executive Summary of Lorrie A. Sinclair Taylor
 Executive Summary of Matthew P. Snow
 Executive Summary of Zaida Cordero Thompson
 Executive Summary of Maria Nicole Wittmann

CC (by email only): Peter Thomas Hansen
 Elizabeth Jean Lancaster
 Alejandra Rueda
 Lorrie A. Sinclair Taylor
 Matthew P. Snow
 Zaida Cordero Thompson
 Maria Nicole Wittmann

CC (by email only): Senator Richard D. Black
 Senator Jennifer B. Boysko
 Senator Barbara Favola
 Senator Mark Obenshain
 Senator Jill H. Vogel
 Delegate John Bell
 Delegate Mark Cole
 Delegate Karrie K. Delaney
 Delegate Gwendolyn W. Gooditis
 Delegate David LaRock
 Delegate Kathleen J. Murphy
 Delegate David A. Reid
 Delegate Michael Webert

CC (by email only): Senator Mark Obenshain
 Senator Dick Saslaw
 Senator Thomas Norment
 Senator Janet Howell
 Senator Louise Lucas
 Senator John S. Edwards
 Senator Ryan McDougale
 Senator Richard Stuart
 Senator William Stanley
 Senator Bryce Reeves
 Senator Benton “Ben” Chafin
 Senator Creigh Deeds
 Senator Glen Sturtevant
 Senator J. Chapman Petersen
 Senator Mark Peake

CC (by email only): Delegate Robert B. Bell
Delegate James A. Leftwich
Delegate Terry G. Kilgore
Delegate Todd C. Gilbert
Delegate Leslie R. Adams
Delegate Jeffrey L. Campbell
Delegate Christopher E. Collins
Delegate Jason S. Miyares
Delegate Margaret B. Ransone
Delegate Ronnie R. Campbell
Delegate Vivian E. Watts
Delegate David J. Toscano
Delegate Charniele L. Herring
Delegate Patrick A. Hope
Delegate Michael P. Mullin
Delegate Jeffrey M. Bourne
Delegate Marcus B. Simon
Delegate Jennifer D. Carroll Foy

CC (by email only): Li-Shann Durst
Marie Johnson
Laurie Forbes Neff
Elizabeth Pendzich

PETER THOMAS HANSEN

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Hansen received his Juris Doctor from the Washington and Lee University School of Law in 1992 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1992 and the District of Columbia in 1999. Mr. Hansen's practice includes appearing before the Federal Immigration Court, the United States District Courts for both the Eastern and Western Districts of Virginia, and the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Prior to attending law school, Mr. Hansen served for two years on active duty in the United States Navy from 1987 to 1989.

Mr. Hansen began his career with the law firm of Allen H. Olson, P.C. in Warrenton, Virginia (December 1992-September 1994). He has also practiced law in Tysons Corner, Washington, D.C., Fairfax, Vienna, and Winchester, with firms that emphasized multi-state and federal civil litigation including Katz & Stone (January 1995-April 1998), Mitterhoff & Henrichsen, P.C. (April 1998-November 2000), Siciliano, Ellis, Dyer & Bocarosee (March 2001-November 2001), Lawson & Silek, P.C. (November 2001-March 2003) and Philip S. Griffin, P.C. (January 2004-April 2006).

Mr. Hansen is the founder of The Law Office of Peter Thos. Hansen, P.C., which was established in April 2006 in Winchester, Virginia and relocated in April 2008 to Warrenton, Virginia. His practice there encompasses a wide range of legal areas including criminal defense (juvenile and traffic/DUI), immigration law (including deportation, asylum/TPS, criminal, and immigration bond), and civil litigation (juvenile, guardianship, qualification and administration of decedent's estates).

Mr. Hansen also served as a public defender for Warren County and Front Royal from June 2005 to July 2007. In that capacity, he handled a wide variety of criminal cases including arson, attempted murder, armed robbery, and narcotics related charges. During his career, Mr. Hansen has served as a court appointed attorney for indigent persons and has been appointed as guardian for incapacitated adults and children. Mr. Hansen is a past president of the Fauquier Bar Association, past Treasurer of the Warren County Bar Association, a former member of the Frederick-Winchester Bar Association, and a member of the Virginia Cattleman's Association. He is also an avid horseman.

In May 2015, Mr. Hansen was appointed as a substitute judge for the 20th Judicial Circuit and has sat in the General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts in Fauquier County, Loudoun County and the surrounding areas, handling civil, criminal, and domestic relations matters. The Committee noted that Mr. Hansen has used his position as a substitute judge to further his knowledge of judicial practices and procedures by attending the annual substitute judges training at the University of Richmond. Mr. Hansen speaks Spanish and is also particularly devoted to making legal services available to the Spanish-speaking members of his community.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submission and interview, Mr. Hansen demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: Mr. Hansen has demonstrated a willingness and ability to administer the law fairly. The Committee finds that Mr. Hansen possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee found that Mr. Hansen's fairness, temperament, intellect, experiences would serve him well as a General District Court Judge. Accordingly, the Committee finds that Mr. Hansen's qualifications meet the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court Judge and that he merits the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

ELIZABETH JEAN LANCASTER

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Lancaster graduated from American University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology. Ms. Lancaster received her Juris Doctor Degree from George Mason University School of Law in 2004 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the same year. In 2006, she was also admitted to practice law in Kentucky.

Ms. Lancaster joined The Office of the Public Defender for Loudoun County in 2005 and currently holds the title of Deputy Public Defender. She supervises eight attorneys and five support staff. Her primary focus is managing the defense of criminal cases, representing indigent persons on charges including murder, felony, rape, and robbery. She manages a case load of over 175-200 clients in Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court and Circuit Court. Ms. Lancaster has tried over 20 jury trials as first chair, and assisted junior attorneys as second chair in multiple jury trials. Her duties also include coordinating appeals in the local courts, Virginia Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court of Virginia. She has appealed over 15 cases to the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Prior to being a Public Defender, Ms. Lancaster worked in the office of Legislative Counsel for the National Rifle Association providing legal support for the Office of Legislative Council and Membership. She also prosecuted patents and trademarks in the United States Patent and Trademark Office, as well as foreign patent and trademark offices, while working for McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP in Washington, DC, and Davidson Berquist Klima & Jackson, LLP in Arlington, Virginia.

Ms. Lancaster was selected by the National Juvenile Defender Center as an expert and resource for juvenile practitioners in the Mid-Atlantic region. She has taught multiple CLE's including IDC Advance Skills, Creative Motions Practice for Juveniles, The Role of the Juvenile Defender, and Ethical Consideration. She created the training for all Virginia court-appointed attorneys who wished to be Juvenile Certified in 2016. Ms. Lancaster is also on the faculty for the Robert E. Shephard Jr. Annual Juvenile Practice Conference, and she has moderated several panels.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Lancaster demonstrated to the Committee that she possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge. She is conscious of inherent biases that interfere with the administration of justice and expresses empathy for the people she serves. She also demonstrated a desire to ensure individuals from all backgrounds are dealt with fairly. The Committee believes she possesses the temperament to sit on the bench of the General District Court.

Professionalism and Integrity: Ms. Lancaster demonstrated a willingness and ability to disregard prejudices and administer the law fairly. The Committee finds that she possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was impressed with Ms. Lancaster's work ethic, her attention to judicial procedure and administration, and her involvement in bringing about juvenile reforms in Loudoun County. The Committee notes, however, that Ms. Lancaster's experience has been limited to criminal law. The Committee finds that Ms. Lancaster's qualifications are sufficiently above the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court Judge and that she merits the Committee's rating of **RECOMMENDED**.

ALEJANDRA RUEDA

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Rueda received her Juris Doctor from the Washington & Lee University School of Law in 1993. She was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1993.

Ms. Rueda has worked as an Assistant Public Defender for the City of Alexandria (1993-1998), an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney for Arlington County (1998-2005), and an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney, Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney, Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney, and Director of the Victim-Witness Office for the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County (2005-present).

Ms. Rueda's primary focus over her career has been the prosecution of misdemeanors and felonies. As she progressed through her career, her duties also included managing litigation, budgeting, serving on various committees and teams devoted to improving responses and the administration of justice, supervising attorneys, and serving as a liaison to law enforcement. She also specialized in, and served as, the designated gang prosecutor for the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office for 10 years.

Ms. Rueda has extensive teaching experience in criminal and trial related matters, and has been recognized by the ATF, Representative Barbara Comstock, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, the Loudoun County Child Advocacy Center, the Falls Church Police Department and Arlington County for her contributions to the community as a Commonwealth's Attorney.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Rueda demonstrated to the Committee that she meets the qualifications for requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: Ms. Rueda demonstrated a willingness and ability to administer the law fairly, both in her submissions and in her interview with this Committee. The Committee finds that she possesses the requisite professionalism and minimum integrity expected for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was satisfied with Ms. Rueda's intellect and demonstrated commitment to public service through her work as a public defender and prosecutor, but has concerns regarding her experience and knowledge of civil practice, which is an important component of the General District Court's docket. Gaining mentorship and training in general civil matters would likely benefit her if she desires to take a position on the bench. Accordingly, the Committee finds that Ms. Rueda's qualifications meet the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court Judge and that Ms. Rueda merits the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

LORRIE A. SINCLAIR TAYLOR

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Sinclair Taylor received her Juris Doctor from Marshall-Wythe School of Law at the College of William and Mary in 1996 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1996. Ms. Sinclair Taylor is also admitted to practice in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. In June 2018, Ms. Sinclair Taylor was admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court.

Ms. Sinclair Taylor began her career as a Research Assistant at the Commonwealth's Attorneys' Services Council, and subsequently worked as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Virginia Beach. After moving to Northern Virginia in 1999, she worked as an associate at The Trade Mark Institute and then at a law firm in Sterling. In 2001, Ms. Sinclair Taylor returned to public service as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Loudoun County, where her experience included both felony and misdemeanor bench trials and jury trials.

Ms. Sinclair Taylor was a principal in the law firm of Sinclair Taylor PLLC in Leesburg from approximately 2008 to 2014. Ms. Sinclair Taylor has been a principal at the law firm of Biberaj, Snow & Sinclair PC since January 2015. Her practice encompasses a wide range of legal areas including criminal defense (felony and misdemeanors for both adults and juveniles), family law (including divorce, child custody, visitation and support), guardianships, conservatorships, personal injury, estate planning, probate, and civil litigation. She is qualified as and regularly serves as guardian *ad litem* for juveniles and, formerly, for incapacitated adults, and court-appointed counsel in criminal cases for misdemeanors, felonies, and juvenile matters.

From 2008 to December 2017, Ms. Sinclair Taylor served as a Special Justice for civil commitments and presided over hundreds of civil commitment hearings. In 2011, she was appointed as a substitute judge for the 20th Judicial Circuit and has sat in the General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts in Loudoun, Clark, Frederick, Prince William, and Spotsylvania Counties, handling civil, criminal, and domestic relations matters. She served as a contractor at Pro-telligent, LLC, teaching comparative law and contractor legal responsibilities for the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs from 2012 to 2014, and was a Legal Instructor at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy from December 2004 to July 2008.

Ms. Sinclair Taylor has served on the Virginia Supreme Court's Court Reporters Committee (2007), on the Virginia State Bar (VSB) Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Board (2011-2017), and as an at-large member of the VSB Bar Council (2012-2018), and as a member of the Virginia Trial Lawyers Association Ethics and Professionalism Committee (June 2016 to present). She is a past President and Board member of the Loudoun County Bar Association.

The Committee noted Ms. Sinclair Taylor's diligence in the continued expansion of practice areas in recent years as she has sought a position in the judiciary. Ms. Sinclair Taylor has gained a high degree of knowledge of the substantive and procedural aspects of the law in her ongoing service as a Substitute Judge and Special Justice. In these positions, she has utilized opportunities for further training and continues to do so on a yearly basis.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Sinclair Taylor demonstrated to the Committee that she has a keen sense of justice and possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge. As a Substitute Judge and Special Justice, she has

demonstrated a balance of patience and decisiveness that is desirable in a jurist. Ms. Sinclair Taylor's notable qualities include her compassion, open-mindedness, inquisitive nature, patience, tact, and understanding. She has consistently shown the ability to facilitate conflict resolution and to deal with counsel and clients calmly, professionally, and courteously.

Professionalism and Integrity: The Committee finds that Ms. Sinclair Taylor possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench. Ms. Sinclair Taylor's personal and professional conduct exemplifies adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee finds that Ms. Sinclair Taylor's integrity, fairness, temperament, intellect, experiences, commitment to public service, and professionalism make her extremely well-qualified for the position of a General District Court Judge and that Ms. Sinclair Taylor therefore merits special recommendation and the designation of **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

MATTHEW P. SNOW

Experience and Legal Ability: Mr. Snow graduated from the College of William and Mary, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government and a minor in Philosophy. He was Captain of the Men's Division I Swim Team, MVP, and a CAA Scholar Athlete. Mr. Snow received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Richmond, T.C. Williams School of Law in 2000 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the same year. He is also admitted to practice in the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Virginia.

Mr. Snow has been a partner at the law firm of Biberaj Snow & Sinclair, PC since 2004. Prior to joining his current firm, Mr. Snow litigated hundreds of criminal cases as a Public Defender in Loudoun County. In his capacity as Associate Attorney with Smith & Davenport, he was contracted to serve as town/city attorney for the municipalities in Prince William County. As such, he prosecuted criminal misdemeanor and traffic offenses and handled abuse/neglect cases and all aspects of local government law.

Mr. Snow's current practice areas include criminal defense and traffic offenses, landlord/tenant law, civil litigation, estate planning, business law, and domestic relations matters. He represents litigants in Virginia state courts, the Virginia Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of Virginia. Mr. Snow is a qualified guardian *ad litem* (GAL), and he mentors newly qualified GAL attorneys. He is also a frequent presenter at legal education seminars regarding the role of a GAL.

Since 2017, Mr. Snow has served as a substitute judge in the General District and Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court, where he presides over all aspects of the daily docket, including arraignments, bond hearings, motions, trials and other disputes. He expresses a deep desire to serve his community and help others, and he believes treating people with respect and dignity is of utmost importance to the success of the judicial system. Additionally, Mr. Snow served as Special Justice for six years and presided over mental commitment hearings. In his capacity as a Substitute Judge and Special Justice, Mr. Snow recognizes the challenges facing citizens with limited financial resources, language barriers and mental health issues. He has demonstrated a commitment to helping others and a deep sense of public service.

Mr. Snow is active in his community and has served on the board of directors for Community Residences, Inc., which is a non-profit group home services provider for mental health and intellectually disabled persons. Previously, he was a board member for the Loudoun County Community Services Board, which oversees substance abuse, mental health and intellectual disability service programs in Loudoun County. Mr. Snow currently serves on the board of directors for The Builders Foundation, which raises funds to assist children and families with financial and other needs. He is also a founding member of the "Beat the Odds" scholarship program, and currently serves as Vice-Chair. This program raises funds for local graduating high school students who have overcome significant life adversity to go to college. Mr. Snow is active in his local Bar and is past chair of the General District Court Bench-Bar Committee. He is the president-elect for the Loudoun Bar Association, and he serves on the board of the Loudoun Bar Foundation.

Fairness and Temperament: Through his submission and interview, Mr. Snow demonstrated to the Committee that he possesses the requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge. He has a calm demeanor and compassion and empathy for the people he serves.

Professionalism and Integrity: Mr. Snow demonstrated a willingness and ability to disregard prejudices and biases in the administration of the law. The Committee finds that he possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was impressed with Mr. Snow's professional experience, integrity, professionalism, and his sincere commitment to public service. Mr. Snow's experience as a Substitute Judge and Special Justice, as well as his knowledge of criminal, civil, and domestic relations matters, make him fully prepared to serve on the bench. The Committee finds that Mr. Snow is well-qualified for the position of General District Court Judge and merits the Committee's rating of **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**.

ZAIDA CORDERO THOMPSON

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Thompson received her Juris Doctor from the Chicago Kent College of Law at the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1993. She was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1993.

Ms. Thompson began her legal career in 1994 as a Staff Attorney with Servicios Hispanos in Herndon, Virginia, and moved to Legal Services of Northern Virginia in 1995. In both positions she litigated family law matters. In 1998, she began a position as an Assistant County Attorney for Fairfax County and litigated and counseled on child and elder welfare matters. Since 2001, she has served as an Assistant County Attorney for Loudoun County, where she has provided legal advice and litigated matters related primarily to land use and ordinance violation, but also has experience with collections, tax sales, and FOIA matters.

Ms. Thompson has served as a presenter and panelist on a variety of topics for Continuing Legal Education seminars and bar association presentations. In 2018, Ms. Thompson was awarded the Impact Award by the Office of the County Attorney for Loudoun County and in 2019 was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Clerk of the Circuit Court for Loudoun County.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and interview, Ms. Thompson demonstrated to the Committee that she meets the qualifications for requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: Ms. Thompson demonstrated a willingness and ability to administer the law fairly, both in her submissions and in her interview with this Committee. The Committee finds that she possesses the requisite professionalism and integrity expected for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was impressed with Ms. Thompson's interest, intellect, and demonstrated commitment to public service through her work with the County Attorney's Office, but has concerns regarding whether her experience and knowledge of the types of matters that come before the General District Court is sufficient. The Committee feels that to be a strong candidate, Ms. Thompson should gain more substantial experience, mentorship and/or training in the types of civil and criminal matters that are more typically before the General District Court. Accordingly, the Committee finds that Ms. Thompson's qualifications meet the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court Judge and that she merits the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.

MARIA NICOLE WITTMANN

Experience and Legal Ability: Ms. Wittman received her Juris Doctor from Michigan State University College of Law in 1994 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1994 and Florida in 1995.

From 1995 to 1998, Ms. Wittman worked with the Office of the State's Attorney in Florida. Ms. Wittman joined the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office in 1998 as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney. In 2005, she was promoted to Deputy and thereafter to Chief Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney. On November 1, 2019, Ms. Wittman was appointed and has served as the interim Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County after the former Commonwealth's Attorney, James Plowman, was appointed as a judge for the 20th Judicial Circuit. Her term as such ends on December 21, 2019. Ms. Wittman ran unsuccessfully this year for the elected position of the Commonwealth's Attorney for Loudoun County.

Ms. Wittman's primary focus is managing the litigation and prosecution of criminal cases. Her duties include recommending and implementing litigation strategy, managing a litigation team, and acting as a management liaison with judges, law enforcement officers, public officials, and attorneys.

As a result of her knowledge and experience in criminal matters, she has participated as a faculty member for and co-chaired Continuing Legal Education seminars.

Fairness and Temperament: Through her submission and review of her qualifications, Ms. Wittman demonstrated to the Committee that she meets the minimum qualifications for requisite fairness and temperament expected of a General District Court Judge.

Professionalism and Integrity: Ms. Wittman has demonstrated a willingness and ability to administer the law fairly, both in her submissions, through her demonstrated commitment to the Commonwealth Attorney's Office and in her interview with this Committee. The Committee finds that she possesses the requisite professionalism and minimum integrity expected for the General District Court bench.

Overall Evaluation: The Committee was satisfied with Ms. Wittman's intellect and commitment to public service but has concerns regarding her experience and knowledge outside of the prosecution of criminal matters, to include civil practice, which issues are commonly before the General District Court. Gaining mentorship and training in a broader range of practice would likely benefit her if she sincerely desires to take a position in our court system. Accordingly, the Committee finds that Ms. Wittman's qualifications meet the minimum requirements for the position of a General District Court Judge and that she merits the Committee's rating of **QUALIFIED**.