

Judge Gallivan Warns of 'Disconnect' Between Child Abuse Reports and Court Filings at Confirmation Hearing

Renominated Superior Court Judge Jessica Gallivan told senators no child abuse or neglect cases have been filed this year, despite widespread reports, urging better alignment between real-world incidents and court action.

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Judge Jessica Gallivan By. V.I. LEGISLATURE

When Judge Jessica Gallivan appeared before the Committee on Rules and Judiciary on Thursday to defend her renomination to the Superior Court, lawmakers seized the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to the work of the family court. The judge has presided over matters in that

jurisdiction for the past six years.

“Of great concern to me is the fact that we have seen a sharp decline in the number of child abuse and neglect cases being filed,” Judge Gallivan noted. “None have been filed today to date for this year and last year, I believe only one case was filed.” These statistics do not match up with the reality on the ground, she believes. “I think that that is incongruent with what we see reported in the press about children being sexually abused, about children being physically abused, about what is often reported in the schools,” the judge said.

That “disconnect” was but one of the issues highlighted by Judge Gallivan. “Sometimes it's the attorneys, sometimes it's the parties, sometimes it's environmental challenges,” Judge Gallivan told Senator Novelle Francis Jr. in response to his query about challenges to the timely and efficient administration of justice in family court matters. “Sometimes it's really the lack of resources that are provided to the court,” she continued. Further, a “revolving door” exists at the courts as “we are unable to pay our employees the salaries that they deserve,” the judge noted.

Noting her observations, Senator Francis wondered how the courts kept victims and complainants “updated in terms of the processing of these cases so that they don't feel disenfranchised.” It was Judge Gallivan’s opinion that adoption of an e-filing system “provides people with an avenue to be more engaged.”

“I think it's important that we're able to navigate the nuances that you spoke about,” opined Mr. Francis. “At the end of the day, I think it's necessary for us to be able to provide timely resolution to cases.” Senator Angel Bolques Jr. agreed with Judge Gallivan that “there's definitely not a lack of issues and problems that come your way in your capacity.”

If reinstated as a family court judge, Gallivan has pledged to do her best to continue chipping away at the backlog of cases. In her submitted testimony, she shared that in the past six years, she had “entered more than 11,310 orders and closed, as of April 16, 2025, some 1657 cases.” Her current backlog is 203 cases, including matters dealing with conservatorship, guardianship, and involuntary commitment.

“I strive to listen intently to each side's evidence and argument. I do my best to wait patiently for all of the evidence before drawing any conclusions or making any final judgment,” Judge Gallivan told committee members. “I am committed to the task. If confirmed, I will bring the same energy to processing my cases timely and efficiently.”

Assured that Judge Gallivan would continue to work in the best interest of Virgin Islanders with matters before the family court, lawmakers voted in favor of her renomination. The question of her reappointment will now be put to the full Senate in the next legislative session.