

Bryan Nominates Attorney Melanie L. Turnbull to Serve as Superior Court Judge for St. Thomas–St. John Family Division

Governor Bryan has nominated attorney Melanie L. Turnbull to the Superior Court’s Family Division for St. Thomas–St. John, citing her strong trial experience, public service, and commitment to justice. The nomination now awaits legislative confirmation.

Judiciary / **Published On October 15, 2025 04:09 PM /**

Staff Consortium **October 15, 2025**

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Attorney Melanie L. Turnbull, nominated by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. to serve as a judge in the Superior Court’s Family Division for the St. Thomas–St. John District.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. has nominated attorney Melanie L. Turnbull to serve as a judge of the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands, Family Division, in the St. Thomas–St. John District.

“Attorney Turnbull’s record reflects strong trial experience, careful preparation and a commitment to equal justice under law,” Governor Bryan said in a statement announcing the nomination. “This nomination is based on qualifications, character and service to the people of the Virgin Islands.”

Turnbull currently serves as an assistant federal public defender for the District of the Virgin Islands, a position she has held since 2018. In that capacity, she has represented indigent clients in arraignments, bail hearings, pretrial proceedings, jury trials, sentencings, and post-conviction matters. Her representative caseload includes fraud, bank robbery, identity theft, firearm offenses, narcotics conspiracies, immigration violations, and contested sentencing hearings seeking below-guidelines outcomes.

Prior to joining the federal office, Turnbull worked as an assistant territorial public defender beginning in 2015, where she handled a full misdemeanor and felony caseload from preliminary hearings through trial and sentencing. That role required strategic case planning, legal research, motion argument, and consistent client-centered representation that emphasized clear communication regarding options, risks, and outcomes.

Earlier in her career, Turnbull served as a judicial law clerk at the Supreme Court of the Virgin Islands under Justice Ive A. Swan, where she drafted pre-argument memoranda, researched Virgin Islands jurisprudence, and assisted in editing and evaluating written opinions. She also completed a legal externship with Chiesi USA Inc., streamlining vendor agreements and conducting regulatory research, and a summer clerkship at the North Carolina Supreme Court under Justice Barbara Jackson.

Turnbull earned her Juris Doctor from Campbell University’s Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law, where she was active in the mock trial team, winning a regional championship in the 38th National Trial Competition. She also served in several leadership roles, including positions within the Student Bar Association and the dean search committee, and contributed as a staff writer for the Campbell Law Observer.

Her academic foundation includes a bachelor’s degree in molecular biology, cum laude, from Hampton University. She is a member of both the Virginia State Bar (admitted in 2013) and the U.S. Virgin Islands Bar (admitted in 2014).

Beyond her professional and academic achievements, Turnbull is active in community and civic organizations. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., serves on the Office of the Territorial Public Defender Board and the Faith Alive Academy School Board, and previously led the Virgin Islands Bar Association’s annual moot court program as head coach.

Governor Bryan’s nomination of Turnbull has been transmitted to the Thirty-Sixth Legislature for advice and consent in accordance with Title 4, Chapter 5, Section 72 of the Virgin Islands Code.