

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Magistrate Gallivan And Judge Watlington Advance At Nomination Hearing

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The Rules and Judiciary Committee met yesterday at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall in St. Thomas to consider the nomination of Magistrate Judge Jessica Gallivan, seen above, to serve as a judge in the Superior Court's Family Division on St. Croix. The committee also considered Judge Debra Watlington's re-appointment to serve in the Superior Court's Family Division in the St. Thomas-St. John District.

Both judges were given favorable nods at the hearing, with their nominations being forwarded to the full Senate, which is set for sessions mid-May.

Governor Albert Bryan appointed Judge Gallivan in early April to serve as a family court judge in St. Croix. As noted by The Consortium in a previous article, her appointment brings Judge Denise Hinds's six-year term to an end. The governor also re-appointed Judge Debra Watlington to serve as family court judge in the St. Thomas-St. John District for another six-year term.



Judge Debra S. Watlington, St. Thomas-St. John Family Division judge

Judge Gallivan testified Wednesday that she grew up on St. Croix, lived in the public housing community, and is a proud graduate of the public school system -- St. Croix Central High School class of 1981. Her extensive legal background and successful legal career, including her current position – her tenth year as magistrate judge of the Superior Court on St. Croix – assures her capability to handle the challenges and responsibilities of family court judge, she said. Ms. Gallivan said she believes she meets the statutory requirements for the position, citing her varied legal background, distinguished public service record, competence and ability to handle a full docket. “I have the grit, compassion, ability to sympathize and, in some cases, even empathize with the plight of those who will likely come before me,” stated judge Gallivan.

Judge Debra Smith Watlington offered testimony as well. After law school, she immediately returned home, became a member of the VI Bar Association in 1985 and has acquired vast experience, over the years, while shouldering the responsibility of working on behalf of children and families in the territory. Judge Watlington assures, “I accept the responsibilities and take them very seriously. I have dedicated every fiber of my being to do this work in the best possible manner.” She expressed her commitment to continue to work for her community.

Both Judges Gallivan and Watlington fielded questions from the legislative body and demonstrated their knowledge, experience, and commitment, not only to their legal profession, but to their communities at large. They both expressed a commitment to provide outstanding service to the people of the Virgin Islands

Judge Gallivan thanked the governor for having the confidence in her and nominating her for the position, the legislative body for giving her nomination full consideration, and her family, friends, and staff for their support during the nomination process.

Judge Watlington thanked the committee members and expressed that it was an emotional day as she reflected on her parents who died shortly after the hurricanes. She said she treasures the life she has had and said if her parents were present, they would be very proud. The judge also expressed gratefulness for the life her parents provided her, and she thanked family and friends for their support.