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Plaskett's Nominee for U.S. Attorney for V.I. Advances to Floor of U.S. Senate Following Delay

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Chamber of the U.S. Senate By. GETTY IMAGES

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett has announced that her pick for U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands, Asst. U.S. Attorney Delia Smith, which was recently held back by maneuvers that allow lawmakers to delay a candidacy, has advanced to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

"I am delighted that the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee voted yesterday to advance Ms. Smith's nomination to the U.S. Senate floor for a vote," Ms. Plaskett said in a statement issued Friday. "While Senate rules and the pandemic caused a few delays, my confidence in Ms. Smith's nomination and eventual confirmation has never wavered."

She added. "I was glad when President Biden accepted my recommendation and nominated Ms. Smith for the position of U.S. Attorney in our territory; her achievements as a Native daughter thus far serve as great evidence of her dedication, grit and overall commitment to serving our community well. President Biden's commitment to appointments that represent not only the most qualified individuals but nominees that look like America is outstanding.

"I look forward to Ms. Smith's service to our country and our territory." Her nomination was [placed on the Senate calendar](#) on Feb. 10.

Ms. Smith's nomination [was delayed](#) by U.S. Senator Tom Cotton because the Department of Justice failed to respond to Mr. Cotton's demand for answers about its lack of assistance to U.S. Marshals being sued over their defense of the Portland federal courthouse in 2020, according to a recent report on Fox News.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Richard Durbin announced last week Thursday that Mr. Cotton was delaying the committee vote of several Justice Department nominees because the Justice Department didn't respond quickly enough to an information request Mr. Cotton had made.

Mr. Cotton demanded a response to his letter "related to an ongoing litigation matter" within 24 hours. He had warned that if the Justice Department failed to respond by his deadline, he would force a delay of several nominees, which he did after Justice failed to meet the deadline.

Ms. Smith [was nominated by Ms. Plaskett](#) for U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands. Her approval in the U.S. Senate would lead to the removal of current U.S. Attorney for the V.I., Gretchen Shappert, who [received an interim appointment](#) from former Attorney General Jeff Session on January 4, 2018. On April 23rd, 2018, the Virgin Islands District Court appointed her as the U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands. Since then, she has overseen a flurry of cases in federal court: from drugs, to [public corruption](#) and gun violence.

"Gretchen Shappert has served this department well for more than 25 years," said Mr. Sessions at the time of the appointment. "For five of those years, she led federal prosecutions in Western North Carolina as United States Attorney. I am confident that, with this extensive experience, she will be an excellent leader as Interim U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands."

According to a description on the U.S. Attorney's website, Ms. Shappert has served as the Assistant Director for the Indian, Violent and Cyber Crime Staff in the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys (EOUSA), since 2010. Prior to joining EOUSA, Ms. Shappert served as the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina from 2004-2009 and as an Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) from 1990-2004. As the United States Attorney and as an AUSA, Ms. Shappert prosecuted a wide range of criminal defendants including outlaw motorcycle gangs and violent drug organizations. Ms. Shappert also served as an Assistant District Attorney, an Assistant Public Defender, and in private practice prior to her federal service. She received her B.A. from Duke University in 1977 and her J.D. from Washington & Lee University School of Law in 1980.

Delegate Plaskett has called for the removal of Ms. Shappert, contending that the position should be filled by a local representative. A local nominee is "of critical importance to the Virgin Islands community," she said in September. Ms. Smith has served as an assistant U.S. attorney for several years.

