

TESTIMONY OF

PEDRO K. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

Before the Committee of Rules and Judiciary of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
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Good morning Honorable Carla J. Joseph, Chair and other distinguished members of the Committee of Rules and Judiciary of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands. My name is Pedro K. Williams, and I am pleased to appear before you today as a nominee for confirmation to serve as a Judge of the Virgin Islands Superior Court, Division of St. Thomas & St. John.

First, I give honor and glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who is the light of my life, and my redeemer who has given me life. Second, I want to thank the Honorable Albert Bryan Jr., Governor of the US Virgin Islands for nominating me to this position. Third, I want to extend my gratitude and love to my wife of over 40 years, Neomie M. Toussaint-Williams, my children, Kelsha and Jenee, their spouses, Carla and Odari, and our grandchildren for allowing me to give of my time to serve our community. Fourth, I would like to thank my Pastors, Rev. (Dr.) Trevor Campbell and George E. Phillips and Church family at St. Thomas Assembly of God and others gathered here for their continued prayers and support for me on this new journey.

For those of you who don't know me, I would like to introduce myself. I was born on the island of Antigua, and my family relocated to St. Thomas when I was 6 years old. The Virgin Islands has been my home ever since. I am a 1978 graduate of Charlotte Amalie High School. In 1982, I graduated with a degree in economics from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. I then attended the University of Texas School of Law in Austin, Texas from which I graduated with a Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) Degree in 1985.

Upon graduation from Law school, I began employment as a Legislative Assistant in Washington, D.C. to the Honorable Ron de Lugo, VI Delegate to Congress. I later became Chief Counsel to Delegate de Lugo. Two years later, I returned home to St. Thomas to assume the role of District Manager of his Congressional office in St. Thomas. In those roles, I drafted legislation, conducted research and provided legal advice. I also served as the liaison between the local government and federal agencies. I also drafted speeches, memorandum of law and position papers. I further represented the Congressman at official and social functions, both on the federal and local levels.

Two years later, in 1989 I left the Congressional office to assume the duties of Legal Counsel to the Virgin Islands Coastal Zone Management Commission at the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR), where I provided legal advice to all three (3) Coastal Zone Management Committees. As CZM Counsel, I represented the various coastal zone management committees before the Virgin Islands Board of Land Use Appeals and the

Courts. My responsibilities included preparing trial briefs and other pleadings. I also provided legal advice and counsel to the Commissioner of Planning and Natural Resources, Atty. Alan D. Smith and later to Roy E. Adams, and other senior staff. I was responsible for the administrative prosecution of persons or other legal entities who were cited for violations of the Coastal Zone Management Act. I also drafted Rules and Regulations for the Department and assisted with the initial drafts of the Virgin Islands Development Law, more commonly known as the Land and Water Use Plan.

In 1991, I left DPNR and entered into private practice of law as an Associate in the Law Offices of Vincent F. Frazer. A year and a half later in 1993, I became a partner in the Law Offices of Frazer & Williams. Atty. Frazer and I remained law partners until he assumed the office of Attorney General of the Virgin Islands in the John P. de Jongh Administration in 2007. From 2007 to 2022, I have remained in private practice as the Law Offices of Pedro K. Williams. In 2023, the office was renamed as the Law Offices of Williams & Williams, when my son, Kelsha Pedro Williams, became a partner in the firm.

While in private practice, I have had the privilege of engaging in a general practice of law where I have represented numerous individuals, organizations and businesses in a variety of legal matters. Some of our clients have included the Board of Trustees of the GERS, The Virgin Islands Board of Education, The Virgin Islands Department of Labor, where I have served as an Administrative Law Judge for unemployed claims, and The Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Over the years, we have represented numerous labor unions including, the American Federation of Teachers, the Firefighters Union, the United Industrial Workers/Seafarers Union, and the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix Educational Administrators Association. We have also represented the St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation and St. Thomas Federal Credit Union. Our clients include other small businesses, churches and community organizations.

Over the years, I have served on a variety of both public and private boards to include: Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority, Legal Services of the Virgin Islands, Women's Resource Center, the Virgin Islands Bar Association, the Virgin Islands Law Revision Commission, and Prophecy Academy Inc.

I have served on the Board of Deacons/Directors of my church, St. Thomas Assembly of God for the past 36 years and have also served as Church Administrator, Youth Director and Sunday School teacher. I have held leadership positions in the Parent Teacher Associations for

every school that our children have attended. I have previously served as counsel to the Territorial and District Committees of the Democratic Party of the Virgin Islands.

As an attorney licensed to practice in the Virgin Islands, I have appeared before the VI Supreme Court, District Court, Appellate Division of the District Court, the Superior Court and the Third Circuit Court. I have also practiced before administrative agencies such as the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB), the VI Board of Land Use Appeals (BLUA), and the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Wrongful Discharge, unemployment and workmen's compensation divisions. I have also arbitrated many cases on behalf of unions, such as St. Thomas/St. John & St. Croix Educational Administrators Association (EAA), St. Thomas/St. John American Federation of Teachers (AFT), United Industrial Workers/Seafarers International Union (UIW), and Fire Fighters Union.

My work experience has involved both criminal and civil cases. I have tried criminal cases ranging from simple assault, possession of unlicensed firearm, unlawful sexual contact to murder. On the civil side, I have tried forcible entry and detainer (FED/Eviction), guardianship, custody, divorce, and represented minors before the family court. My litigation experience has involved temporary and permanent restraining orders/injunctions, foreclosures, personal injury, wrongful discharge, discrimination, breach of contract, partition, and probate. I have represented clients in real estate transactions, both sellers and buyers. With the exception of admiralty, taxes and bankruptcy, I have practiced in about every area of the law.

As such, if confirmed for this nomination, I will bring my almost forty (40) years of legal experience to the bench. I must admit, being a judge is an awesome responsibility. I would have the responsibility of the lives of individuals in my hand, especially in the criminal area, where I may be required to sentence persons for the rest of their lives in prison. In civil cases, I would have to decide who wins and who loses. As such, I will need much wisdom to make decisions. I would hasten to add that we have been blessed in the Virgin Islands with a judiciary that is second to none. The Judges in the Superior Court have set the bar high for us to follow.

As a Judge, I pledge to be fair, unbiased, respectful and empathetic. To accomplish these goals, I must know the law and be able to apply the law to the facts and understand how my judicial decisions will affect the persons appearing before me. I will be required to render judgments that are fair, impartial and just. It will require that I treat each party and counsel with respect and empathy.

I also truly understand the Legislature's, community, and frankly, my colleagues concerns about the Court's ability to move cases. I understand that Justice delayed is Justice denied. The Court must find and implement more meaningful ways to move its docket. As such, I pledge to work hard and apply myself to move cases along. This will include but not be limited to ruling on cases from the bench so that in appropriate cases, litigant will know where they stand when they leave the courtroom. Also, I commit to issue timely written decisions and opinions. Of course, none of that can be done in a vacuum without the appropriate assistance from support staff, clerk of the Court and others to assist in keeping track of cases and moving cases. Much has been said about the Court granting numerous continuances in cases. I will hasten to add there are legitimate reasons for continuances. However, a judge must know the counsels appearing before the Court and whether they are being provided with legitimate reasons for a continuance or a Counsel who has not done the work and prepared for trial. I will be able to tell the difference and will act accordingly.

I don't take any of these responsibilities lightly. But will base my decisions on the law, my legal experience as well as my life experiences as a person who has grown up in this community, knows this community, has been involved in this community and only want what is best for the community.

Should I be confirmed to the position of Judge of the Superior Court, I will do my utmost to follow in the footsteps of our great jurist and leave a legacy for others to follow.

If I am confirmed to this position, I pledge that I will use the legal skills I have developed over the past 40 years to benefit the people of the Virgin Islands. I will use my ability to analyze complex and voluminous information and other issues to make prudent, fair and reasonable decisions. I am a problem solver and decision maker. I am well organized and can multitask. I am a quick study and can review and comprehend voluminous documents in order to make decisions. I have no problem in learning new things and being able to conduct research to get answers to questions.

Senators, I welcome this new challenge of serving as a Judge in the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas/St. John Division. I humbly ask for your support and trust in my ability and commitment to work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. I ask that you favorably consider my nomination.

Opening Statement for Judicial Nomination

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That completes my prepared remarks. I am available to respond to any questions that you might have.