

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2009

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 25 2025

RE: JUD. COM. NO. 31

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2025  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred Judiciary Communication No. 31, submitting for study and consideration the appointment of:

DISTRICT COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT

J.C. No. 31      ROCHELLE I. VIDINHA CUSUMANO  
for a term to expire in 6 years. (Name  
corrected to Rochelle I. Vidinha  
Cusumano by JC32)

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Rochelle I. Vidinha Cusumano for service on the District Court of the First Circuit.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Rochelle I. Vidinha Cusumano from the Office of the Public Defender, Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu, Iron Workers Stabilization Fund, Hawai'i Women Lawyers, and fifty-one individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Rochelle I. Vidinha Cusumano from the Hawaii State Bar Association.

The Hawaii State Bar Association Board of Directors (HSBA Board) uses a rating system that considers several criteria to assist the HSBA Board in making a recommendation to your Committee

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on whether the appointee is "qualified" or "not qualified". Specifically, the criteria the HSBA Board employs is the same criteria found in the American Bar Association's Guidelines for Reviewing Qualifications of Candidates for State Judicial Office. Those guidelines include the following criteria, which are not exclusive: integrity, diligence, legal knowledge and ability, professional experience, temperament, financial responsibility, public service, and ability to perform the responsibilities and duties required of the position for which the applicant has been appointed. Upon review of the established criteria, the HSBA Board found the appointee to be qualified for the position of District Court Judge in the District Court of the First Circuit.

Ms. Vidinha Cusumano earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Social Work from Pacific University. She earned her Juris Doctor from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she was a recipient of the Kamehameha Schools Scholarship. Ms. Vidinha Cusumano has been licensed to practice law in the State of Hawai'i since 2001.

Ms. Vidinha Cusumano has dedicated her career to public service. Since 2001, she has worked at the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu. Ms. Vidinha Cusumano currently works at the Department as Team Captain of the Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Unit. As Team Captain, Ms. Vidinha Cusumano is responsible for supervising deputy prosecuting attorneys and handles a high volume of sexual assault and human trafficking cases. She has prosecuted felony sexual assault and related cases, including human trafficking, child pornography, commercial sexual exploitation, and kidnapping cases as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. Notably, Ms. Vidinha Cusumano was the first to charge and prosecute a labor trafficking case in the State. Additionally, she is responsible for responding to media and community inquiries to improve communication regarding sex assault and trafficking cases, establishing and improving relationships with partnering agencies and organizations, and mentoring summer interns to ensure increased recruitment for the Department.

Ms. Vidinha Cusumano has also worked as a Coordinator for the Honolulu County Human Trafficking Task Force since 2020. In this role, she has facilitated a coordinated effort between county, state, and federal law enforcement and service providers to combat human trafficking in local communities. Additionally, Ms. Vidinha Cusumano collaborates with task force members to establish



procedures to effectively identify and provide services to victims of sex trafficking and conduct victim-centered investigations and prosecutions. She also engages in community outreach and conducts trainings to raise awareness of human trafficking.

Ms. Vidinha Cusumano is also an active member of her community. She has served as a Special Olympics Torch Run Liaison continuously since 2014. She has also been recognized for her professional work and was the recipient of both the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney's Excellence Award and the 2024 Hawai'i Women Lawyers Outstanding Woman Lawyer Award.

Testimony submitted in support of Ms. Vidinha Cusumano notes her even temperament, integrity, and fairness. Testimony also commends Ms. Vidinha Cusumano's ability to make reasoned decisions while maintaining composure and her aloha and fairness for both victims and defendants.

Your Committee finds that, based on the testimony submitted on her behalf, responses to questions asked by the members of your Committee, and your Committee's review of information about her and her qualifications, Ms. Rochelle I. Vidinha Cusumano has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a District Court Judge in the District Court of the First Circuit and possesses the legal expertise and integrity to fully and faithfully discharge the duties associated with that judicial office.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee, after full consideration of the background, experience, and qualifications of the appointee, has found the appointee to be qualified for the position to which appointed and recommends that the Senate consent to the appointment.

Respectfully submitted on  
behalf of the members of the  
Committee on Judiciary,



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KARL RHOADS, Chair



The Senate  
Thirty-Third Legislature  
State of Hawai'i

**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Judiciary**  
**JDC**  
**Consent**

Gov. Msg./Jud. Com. No.:* <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">JC 31</div>	Committee Referral: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">JDC</div>	Date: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">4/24/25</div>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent 2347</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Consent 2349</div></div>				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
RHOADS, Karl (C)	✓			
GABBARD, Mike (VC)				✓
CHANG, Stanley	✓			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A.	✓			
AWA, Brenton				✓
<b>TOTAL</b>	<div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">3</div>			<div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">2</div>
Recommendation: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted</div></div>				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive; margin-top: 10px;">[Signature]</div>				
Distribution: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;"><div>Original File with Committee Report</div><div>Yellow Clerk's Office</div><div>Pink Drafting Agency</div><div>Goldenrod Committee File Copy</div></div>				

\*Only one Message/Communication per Record of Votes