

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2008

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 25 2025

RE: JUD. COM. NO. 30

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. 30, submitting for study and consideration the appointment of:

DISTRICT FAMILY COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT

J.C. No. 30 WILSON A. UNGA
for a term to expire in 6 years;

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Wilson A. Unga for service on the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Wilson A. Unga from one member of the Hawaii State House of Representatives, Office of the Public Defender, Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu, two members of the Honolulu City Council, Iron Workers Stabilization Fund, Council on Social Work Education, Fia Care, Diamond Bakery, and more than one hundred individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Wilson A. Unga 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 on whether the appointee is "qualified" or "not qualified".

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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 Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga received a Bachelors of Science degree in International Politics from Georgetown University, where he graduated Cum Laude. He also earned a Master of Business Administration degree from the Shidler College of Business at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he graduated Cum Laude and was the recipient of the Shidler Department Merit Scholarship and Chew Jay Family Scholarship. Mr. Unga received his Juris Doctor from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he received the John S. Edmunds award for excellence in legal writing, was a recipient of the Advocates for Public Interest Law Grant, and was Co-Editor in Chief for the Asian Pacific Law & Policy Journal. Mr. Unga has been licensed to practice law in the State of Hawai'i since 2012.

Mr. Unga has dedicated his career to public service. Since 2013, he has worked as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu and is currently the Felony Trials Division Chief. As the Felony Trials Division Chief, Mr. Unga supervises litigation and administrative activities for all felony prosecutors assigned to the division to ensure effective prosecution strategies and adherence to legal standards. Mr. Unga was previously the Domestic Violence Felony Team Captain, where he oversaw the prosecution of felony domestic violence cases, directed legal strategies, collaborated with law enforcement, and ensured compliance with victim advocacy standards. Before working at the Department, Mr. Unga clerked for Justice Richard W. Pollack at the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Judge Edwin C. Nacino in the Circuit Court for the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is an active member of several professional and community organizations. He is currently a member of the Hawaii



State Bar Association's Judicial Administration Committee and Pacific Islander Legal Association Committee and the Hawai'i Supreme Court's Court Interpreters and Language Access Committee. Mr. Unga is also currently the Chairman of the Lumana'i Scholarship and is a Youth Mentor for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at Kahuku High School.

Testimony submitted in support of Mr. Unga's appointment commends his preparedness, even temperament, and compassion. Testimony further indicates that Mr. Unga possesses a steady moral compass, unshakable sense of fairness, and genuine dedication to public service. Numerous testifiers also praise his contributions and deep connection to his community.

Your Committee finds that, based on the testimony submitted on his behalf, responses to questions asked by the members of your Committee, and your Committee's review of information about him and his qualifications, Wilson A. Unga has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a District Family Court Judge 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,



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.:* <i>JC 30</i>	Committee Referral: <i>JDC</i>	Date: <i>4/24/25</i>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent 2347 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Consent 2349				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
RHOADS, Karl (C)	✓			
GABBARD, Mike (VC)				✓
CHANG, Stanley	✓			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A.	✓			
AWA, Brenton				✓
TOTAL	<i>3</i>			<i>2</i>
Recommendation:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature:				
				
Distribution:				
Original File with Committee Report	Yellow Clerk's Office	Pink Drafting Agency	Goldenrod Committee File Copy	

*Only one Message/Communication per Record of Votes