

STAND. COM. REP. NO. 2708

Honolulu, Hawaii

FEB 24 2026

RE: GOV. MSG. NO. 684

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirty-Third State Legislature  
Regular Session of 2026  
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred Governor's Message No. 684, submitting for study and consideration the appointment of:

CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH CIRCUIT (ISLAND OF KAUA'I)

G.M. No. 684      STEPHANIE R.S. CHAR  
for a term to expire in 10 years,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Judge Stephanie R.S. Char for service on the Circuit Court of the Fifth Circuit, Island of Kaua'i.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Judge Stephanie R.S. Char from the Office of the Governor, Office of the Mayor of the County of Kaua'i, and one individual.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Judge Stephanie R.S. Char 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". 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 Circuit Court Judge of the Fifth Circuit, Island of Kaua'i.

Judge Char received her Bachelor of Arts degrees in philosophy and communications and a Master of Arts degree in philosophy from the University of Denver. She received her Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law, and has been licensed to practice law in California since 2002 and in Hawai'i since 2003.

Since 2020, Judge Char has served as a District Family Court Judge of the Fifth Circuit, where she has presided over mostly family court cases. Judge Char has also been temporarily assigned as a Circuit Court Judge to cover the vacancy in the Fifth Circuit, where she has heard both civil and criminal cases. Additionally, during her time on the bench, Judge Char has participated in a number of different task forces, with monthly, quarterly, and biannual meetings, which have required her to prepare digital presentations for various entities.

Judge Char has dedicated her legal career to public service and, before becoming a District Family Court Judge for the Fifth Circuit, worked in the Office of the Public Defender from 2003 to 2020. Judge Char was a Supervising Deputy Public Defender in the Kaua'i office from 2017 to 2020, where she supervised a staff of five Deputy Public Defenders, one investigator, and two office clerks. In addition to supervising other staff, Judge Char was also a trial attorney in the Circuit Court and managed a full caseload. Before being promoted to Supervising Deputy Public Defender, Judge Char worked as a Deputy Public Defender on both O'ahu and Kaua'i from 2003 to 2017, where she started her career in District and Traffic Court with misdemeanor and petty misdemeanor crimes. Judge Char eventually became a trial attorney in Circuit Court, where she handled a variety of matters including arraignments, motions, pre-trial motion hearings, sentencing hearings, motions to revoke probation, and legal research.

In addition to her service in the State's courtrooms as a Judge and Deputy Public Defender, Judge Char has also been an



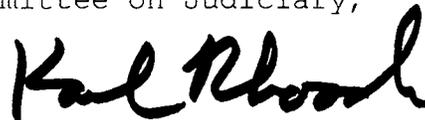
active member of her community. She has served on the Mandatory Continuing legal Education Board of Directors, Kaua'i Criminal Defense Bar, Kaua'i Economic Opportunity Advisory Board for Mediation Program, and has coached youth soccer. Additionally, Judge Char has volunteered as a high school mock trial judge and assisted with Courts in the Community.

Testimony submitted on behalf of Judge Char's appointment commends her legal knowledge, judicial expertise, thoroughness, and fairness. The testimony also noted her integrity, ability to work with others, and demonstrated leadership abilities as a Judge, Deputy Public Defender, and member of her community. Your Committee also notes that testimony highlights Judge Char's strong ties to the County of Kaua'i. Specifically, testimony notes that Judge Char was raised on Kaua'i, graduated from Kapa'a High School, and returned home as soon as she could to reconnect and give back to her community.

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, Judge Stephanie R.S. Char has the experience, knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a Circuit Court Judge of the Fifth Circuit, and she has the legal expertise, integrity, and demeanor 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



