

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

3910

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 23 2026

RE: GOV. MSG. NO. 797

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

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

G.M. No. 797 MICHAEL K. SOONG
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 Michael K. Soong 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 Michael K. Soong from the Office of the Governor and seven individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Judge Michael K. Soong 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,

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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 Soong attended the University of La Verne, where he received a Bachelor of Science, Accounting, and Business Administration. He received his Juris Doctor from the Southwestern School of Law in Los Angeles, California. Judge Soong has been licensed to practice law in the State of Hawai'i since 1986.

Since October 2025, Judge Soong has been a temporary judge for the Circuit Court of the Fifth Circuit. Judge Soong is also a District Court Judge for the Fifth Circuit, where he serves as the Deputy Chief Judge. Before becoming a judge, Judge Soong had his own practice at the Law Office of Michael K. Soong, where he focused on criminal law and personal injury plaintiff litigation.

Judge Soong also dedicated a significant portion of his legal career to serving the public. From 1996 to 2004, Judge Soong worked at the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney of the County of Kaua'i, where he was the elected Prosecuting Attorney for the county for two terms. Judge Soong was also a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney from 1991 to 1996, where he prosecuted all levels of offenses from petty misdemeanors to felonies. Judge Soong also worked at the Office of the Public Defender on O'ahu and Kaua'i, where he was a Deputy Public Defender responsible for defending clients charged with petty misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and felonies.

In addition to his legal career, Judge Soong is also active in the legal community. He serves on several professional commissions and committees, including the Judiciary Committee on Judicial Education; Hawaii Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism; Judiciary Standing Committee on Innovation, Technology, and Self-Represented Litigants; Hawaii State Bar Association Nominating Committee; Hawaii Access to Justice Commission; and the Judiciary's Committee on Operational Solutions. Judge Soong also supports his local community and is a member of the Royal Order of Kamehameha, Kaumualii Chapter, and Mamaka Aialo.



Testimony submitted in support of Judge Soong's appointment commends his leadership, strong work ethic, and keen understanding of applicable law. Testimony further indicates that Judge Soong has a strong ability to relate to people and is able to reach fair outcomes in each case before him. Other testifiers also praise his compassion, dedication to the law, and commitment to public service.

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, Judge Michael K. Soong has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a Circuit Court Judge of the Fifth Circuit (Island of Kaua'i), 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



