

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

3991

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 29 2026

RE: GOV. MSG. NO. 801

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

CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE HAWAI'I STATE SUPREME COURT

G.M. No. 801      VLADIMIR P. DEVENS  
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 Associate Justice Vladimir P. Devens for service on the Hawai'i State Supreme Court as Chief Justice.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Justice Vladimir P. Devens from the Office of the Governor; Office of the Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu; Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu; Hawai'i Association for Justice; United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO; Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO; Hawaii Filipino Lawyers Association; International Union of Operating Engineers Local 3; UNITE HERE! Local 5; Nā Wahine Toa Foundation; Iron Workers Stabilization Fund, Local 625; University of Hawaii Professional Assembly; Hawai'i Longshore Division International Longshore & Warehouse Union; Hawaii State AFL-CIO; Hawai'i State Teachers Association; Hawai'i Nurses' Association, OPEIU Local 50; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1260; State



of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers; Sumida's Auto Repair; and twenty-three individuals.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to the appointment of Justice Vladimir P. Devens from three individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Justice Vladimir P. Devens from the Hawaii State Bar Association and one individual.

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 Chief Justice of the Hawai'i State Supreme Court.

#### BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Justice Devens received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley, *Magna Cum Laude*, and his Juris Doctor degree from the University of California, Berkeley School of Law, where he was an associate editor of the Industrial Relations Law Journal. He has been licensed to practice law in the State of Hawai'i since 1987.

Since January 2024, Justice Devens has been an Associate Justice for the Hawai'i State Supreme Court. In that time, he has participated in opinions, memorandum opinions, concurrences, and dissents in seventeen cases. He has also been active in various Judiciary-related committees, including as Co-Chair of the Committee on Artificial Intelligence and the Courts; court liaison for the Attorneys and Judges Assistance Program Board, Lawyers' Fund for Client Protection, and Office of Disciplinary Counsel;



and as a member of the Hawai'i Access to Justice Commission and Commission on Professionalism.

Before becoming an Associate Justice, Justice Devens was a shareholder of the Law Offices of Vladimir P. Devens, where his practice emphasized litigation, appeals, personal injury, labor relations, constitutional issues, land use, workers' compensation, legislation, and alternative dispute resolution. During his time as a practicing attorney, Justice Devens litigated cases in all of the State's courts, including District Court, Family Court, Circuit Court, and federal courts in the District of Hawai'i. Before starting his own firm, Justice Devens was a partner at Meheula & Devens, LLP, and Winer Meheula & Devens, LLP. Justice Devens was also previously an associate at two firms: Ikazaki, Devens, Lo, Youth & Nakano, and Winer and Meheula. Additionally, Justice Devens worked as a police officer for the Honolulu Police Department from 1989 to 1995, where he attained the rank of corporal, earned an Outstanding Recruit Award and Academic Award, was nominated for Officer of the Year, and was Recruit Class Leader. Justice Devens continued to volunteer with the Honolulu Police Department as a reserve police officer from 1995 to 2023.

In addition to his legal career, Justice Devens has served the legal community by sitting on various boards, commissions, and committees, including volunteering on the Disciplinary Board of the Hawai'i Supreme Court; Board of Directors and various committees for Crime Stoppers Honolulu, Inc.; and was the Chair, Vice Chair, and a Commissioner for the State Land Use Commission. Justice Devens' service also includes service for the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA). He is currently a Co-Chair of the HSBA Committee on Judicial Administration and was previously a member of the HSBA Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the Committee on Strategic Planning and Committee on Continuing Legal Education.

Justice Devens has also spent significant time serving the youth in his local community. Before becoming an Associate Justice for the Hawai'i State Supreme Court, he was a boxing coach from 1995 to 2024 for at-risk youth and previously coached for the Amateur Softball Association Girls Softball, Kalaniana'ole Athletic Club Baseball, and American Youth Soccer Organization and Hawaii Youth Soccer Organization Soccer.

Testimony submitted in support of Justice Devens' appointment commends his productivity and legal knowledge and experience.



Throughout his tenure as an Associate Justice, Justice Devens has demonstrated his preparedness for oral argument by asking tough questions of both sides and promptly preparing thoroughly-researched and well-written opinions. Testimony further commends his character, work ethic, and collaborative leadership style.

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, Justice Vladimir P. Devens has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be Chief Justice of the Hawai'i State Supreme Court, and possesses the legal expertise and integrity to fully and faithfully discharge the duties associated with that judicial office.

#### CONCERNS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMITTEE


Your Committee notes the concerns raised by the Chair and one other member of your Committee relating to Justice Devens' failure to disclose his involvement with the political action committee (PAC) Be Change Now when he applied for the position of Associate Justice in 2022. For four years, from April 2019 until December 2023, according to filings with the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Justice Devens was one of three directors of Be Change Now, a super PAC operated by Pacific Resource Partnership. Your Committee notes that Justice Devens was asked to disclose anything that could bring negative reactions during the Senate confirmation process and adversely affect his nomination during his appointment process as Associate Justice to the Hawai'i State Supreme Court in 2023. Your Committee only learned of Justice Devens' involvement with Be Change Now through the press, following Justice Devens' confirmation as Associate Justice in 2023, and not through any disclosure provided by Justice Devens. Additionally, one member of your Committee expressed the significance of Justice Devens' relationship with Be Change Now due to the PAC's prominent and controversial political advertising in several major elections over the past fifteen years. Your Committee also notes that a few individuals testified in opposition to Justice Devens' nomination due to his involvement with Be Change Now. Specifically, the individuals testified that the amount of money Be Change Now and Pacific Resource Partnership has spent to influence the outcome of elections and the types of advertisements and activities Be Change Now has engaged in during prior elections undermine their trust in Justice Devens' ability to serve as Chief Justice of the Hawai'i State Supreme Court.



A majority of your Committee does not believe that these issues rise to the level of concern that they should prevent Justice Devens from serving as the Chief Justice. Your Committee emphasizes that, although the Chair of your Committee made the recommendation that the Senate consent to Justice Devens' nomination for appointment as the Chief Justice of the Hawai'i State Supreme Court, the Chair and one other member of your Committee voted not to consent to Justice Devens' nomination due to the abovementioned concerns.

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



