

**TESTIMONY**  
**THE HONORABLE INGRID M. TURNER**  
**PUBLIC HEARING ON JUDICIAL SELECTION**  
**LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MARYLAND JUDICIAL**  
**COUNCIL WORKGROUP TO STUDY JUDICIAL SELECTION**

Monday, November 28, 2022

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Maryland Judicial Center

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Public Testimony

The Honorable Ingrid M. Turner

Former Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland Judge; Former Chair of the Prince George's County Council; and Retired Commander, JAGC, U.S. Navy

Legislative Committee of the Maryland Judicial Council

Workgroup to Study Judicial Selection

Addressing the Judicial Selection Process

Monday, November 28, 2022

To the Legislative Committee of the Maryland Judicial Council; Workgroup to Study Judicial Selection Co-Chairs, The Honorable Kathleen Dumais and The Honorable Alexander Williams; Workgroup Members; and all distinguished guests participating in today's public hearing, good afternoon. I am pleased for the opportunity to join you today.

I am Ingrid M. Turner, Former Seventh Judicial Circuit of Maryland Judge; Former Prince George's County Council Chair and District 4 Council Member; and Retired Commander, Judge Advocate General's Corps, United States Navy. Thank you for the privilege of providing public comment on the judicial nomination process.

My time before you is limited, so I will not prolong the point or my position.

**I am in full support of an election process for Circuit Court Judges.**

Our Constitution has established a government of three co-equal branches, but I would argue that they are not always treated as such.

The executive and legislative branches of government rightly provide Maryland residents with a voice in the democratic process through one of our most important rights and responsibilities as citizens – voting.

Conversely, the Judicial Branch has historically offered limited, and often veiled opportunities for the people's voice to be heard.

If the branches of government are truly equal, the Judicial Branch and its Circuit Court Judges should have an election process.

Eliminating elections for Circuit Court Judges strips residents of rights to cast a vote for the person they choose. While one might argue that the judicial nomination committee is best equipped to vet who sits on the bench, ensuring that we have a process that reflects the will of the people – through their vote – is ultimately the best way to ensure that Marylanders can have public trust and confidence in the judiciary that is called to interpret the laws and administer justice fairly.

We may not all agree on who is the most qualified, but it remains the right of the people to choose whom they believe is best qualified for the position.

My perspective on the judicial nomination process is unique and offers an opportunity to bring additional light for this body's consideration of what is in the best interest of Marylanders.

In 2016, I was elected by the citizens of Prince George's County to serve as a Circuit Court Judge, the County's first successful election to the Circuit Court without judicial selection committee support or a gubernatorial appointment in over 50 years. I am pleased to report that two additional Prince Georgians have been successful in their Circuit Court elections since that time. Our citizens have clearly become more engaged concerning the activities of the judiciary and its processes. It is important for their engagement to deepen and continue, not stall because of changes of the process.

In 2006, I was honored to be elected by the citizens of District 4 to the Prince George's County Council and again in 2010. During this time, my Council colleagues unanimously elected me to serve as Council Chair for Legislative Year 2012. The careful and deliberate review of Executive Appointments subject to Council confirmation was a critical part of that work.

During my military career, which began in 1982 after receiving a nomination to the United States Naval Academy from Congressman Steny Hoyer and concluded upon my retirement from the Navy as a Commander in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, I served on selection boards charged with selecting officers for promotion, continuation, or early retirement.

My journey to the bench was one that garnered neither the support of a nominating committee, or an appointment by our Governor. Nevertheless, because the residents of Prince George's County – through their vote – were afforded the opportunity to place their trust and confidence in my background and experience, I was able to effectively serve as a Circuit Court Judge, demonstrating that the election process works.

Yes, voters can elect a person some believe to be unqualified, but the appointment process, whereby a small select group of hand-picked nominating committee members get to hand pick individuals to forward to the Governor, is more likely to reward "the good old boy" network while decreasing transparency and most importantly, diluting the democratic process. I pray this great state of Maryland never takes away a citizens' right to vote. We must support and uphold the rights of our citizens to cast a vote in this important branch of government – Our Judiciary.

In closing, I want to again voice my support of the election process for Circuit Court judges and if this is truly an open review of the entire judicial selection process, I offer a bold move for Maryland to lead the way and seriously consider moving to an election process for ALL judicial selections.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to provide my testimony and will submit my written comments, in their entirety, for the record. Thank you for this opportunity.