



U.S. Department of Justice

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July 7, 2022

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley:

I am writing you in support of the confirmation of United States Magistrate Judge Camille Vélez-Rivé as United States District Court Judge for the District of Puerto Rico.

From 1995 to 2001, I served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney (AUSA) in the Criminal Division of the Puerto Rico U.S. Attorney's Office. It is in that office that I first met and worked with Judge Vélez-Rivé, who also served as an AUSA in both the Civil and Appellate Divisions. From 2001 to 2019, I served as an AUSA, Senior Litigation Counsel, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, and Acting United States Attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida.

In October 2019, I was confirmed and sworn in as the United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico. In that role, I once again have had the opportunity to directly interact with Judge Vélez-Rivé as part of my liaison duties with members of the judiciary.

Based on my personal interactions with Judge Vélez-Rivé, as well as my conversations with trusted colleagues, the defense bar, and others, I can affirm without reservation that she clearly possesses all of the qualities that are typically considered when evaluating judicial nominees – outstanding legal ability, breadth of experience, the highest reputation for integrity, and a sound judicial temperament.

From the time I first worked with Judge Vélez-Rivé, I was always struck by the fact that not only was she a great colleague and attorney -- she was a good person. Those qualities one would expect would allow her to transition well to the bench, but one does not always know if that will be the case. That is why oftentimes judicial nominees are evaluated in terms of their “capacity” for sound judicial temperament. This is because most nominees, unlike Judge Vélez-Rivé, do not have an 18-year career of service as a judge. There is no need to speculate. Judge Vélez-Rivé has demonstrated a sound judicial temperament during her judicial career.

To be sure, sound judicial temperament requires adherence to the concepts of judicial due process and establishing and maintaining control in the courtroom (in a respectful manner without embarrassing or belittling). Judge Vélez-Rivé embodies and embraces those concepts. First, she provides all litigants with an opportunity to be heard, to present their views and arguments, and to make the necessary record. However, that is not to say that Judge Vélez-Rivé allows litigants with a strong character to intimidate or act unprofessionally. She maintains control in her courtroom through respect and a quiet dignity.

Judge Vélez-Rivé has always demonstrated the highest degree of integrity in her legal career, as reflected by her outstanding reputation in the legal community and her work ethic. In talking to others, common descriptors for Judge Vélez-Rivé included “intellectually honest,” “excellent,” “always respectful to everyone,” “always prepared,” and “well respected.” When I was contacted as part of the vetting process within the Department, I had just reviewed the court calendar for the next day, a Friday. I was struck by the fact that Judge Vélez-Rivé had a robust calendar of hearings. This is a small example that underscores her commitment to the district and diligence in the performance of her duties.

Regarding her professional competence and breadth of experience, again Judge Vélez-Rivé has an established record as a jurist, an AUSA, and an attorney in private practice. Her written opinions and analysis are consistently high quality and well-reasoned and supported. No doubt, her effective writing has strong roots in her

appellate practice as an AUSA when we worked together in the 1990s, as well as her private practice work in corporate litigation.

An important consideration for the Judiciary Committee when looking at Judge Vélez-Rivé's service on the bench in Puerto Rico is the heavy volume of criminal cases she has handled over the years. Indeed, Puerto Rico is unique in many respects in its criminal docket. Complex and multi-defendant criminal cases involving large scale drug trafficking and violent crimes are routine, including indictments of 30, 40, 50 or over 100 defendants in a single case. Those cases require a great deal of organization and efficiency by the court, especially at the early stages of initial appearances, appointment of counsel, detention hearings, and ensuring the production of discovery materials. Also, because of the extreme violence in Puerto Rico, defendants eligible for capital punishment are not uncommon. All of the initial court hearings, as well as many suppression hearings and change of plea hearings are handled by magistrate judges. Judge Vélez-Rivé has clearly established that she can effectively manage a heavy criminal docket in Puerto Rico – at a time when additional district court judges are greatly needed.

Furthermore, because of the heavy criminal docket handled by district court judges and Speedy Trial Act concerns, many civil cases are referred to magistrate judges for discovery, motion practice, and even trial. An experienced civil litigator in my office has said that, while most agencies are generally reluctant to consent to having a magistrate judge assume responsibility for a case, they routinely consent to Judge Vélez-Rivé. This is because she has significant experience handling civil matters and a reputation that each party will be treated fairly and with respect. She has also performed exceptionally well in the mediation of cases, which greatly benefits the parties and the effective administration of the court and justice.

In sum, United States Magistrate Judge Vélez-Rivé would be a welcome addition to the federal bench in Puerto Rico and I wholeheartedly recommend that she be confirmed. If you wish to discuss my recommendation further, please feel free to contact me at (787) 282-1901 or via email at [w.stephen.muldrow@usdoj.gov](mailto:w.stephen.muldrow@usdoj.gov).

Sincerely,



W. Stephen Muldrow  
United States Attorney