

Hon. Victoria A.B. Willis Biography

I was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Arlington, Virginia attending the local public school until 3rd grade when I was transferred to a private all girls school in Alexandria, Virginia from where I graduated. I then enrolled at Vanderbilt University and graduated magna cum laude with a dual degree in History and Philosophy. From there I went to law school at the University of Richmond School of Law where I served on the Law Review and won the Carrico Moot Court competition.

I began my legal career as a law clerk to Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico of the Supreme Court of Virginia. While in Richmond, I met and subsequently married my husband Gordon Willis. We moved to his hometown, and I began my active legal practice in 1988 as a general practitioner in Fredericksburg, Virginia - taking on both civil and criminal matters as there was no public defender office in the area at that time. I regularly appeared in Court for civil as well as criminal matters during that time period.

In 1990 we welcomed our first child, Phoebe. Shortly after her birth, I went in-house with the local Hospital and moved up through the corporate ranks to manage all legal matters for the entire health care system. As such, my practice encompassed a broad range of State and Federal laws, policies, and regulations. I had the unique opportunity to work closely with a number of Federal and State agencies as the hospital and related health care providers worked to comply with both State and Federal rules, regulations, and statutes at the same time the system was experiencing significant expansion. This oftentimes required the ability to coordinate disparate interests to reach acceptable positions on issues. One such example is the Certificate of Public Need program and my work in this area resulted in a request by the Northwestern Health System Agency Board to become a Board member and I was elected to various positions of that agency during my time with that Board.

As chief legal counsel of the health system, I retained full responsibility for all civil litigation. As such, I directly supervised outside counsel in the drafting of discovery responses and pleadings, managing depositions and attending trial. I had settlement authority up to \$500,000.

As a member of the health care system's Executive Team, I had an active role in securing bond ratings as well as funding for a new hospital complex, nursing homes and related health care ventures. I was on the steering committee that developed the Corporate Compliance program and policies for the entire health care system. I was the legal point person during an IRS Coordinated Examination Audit which spanned several years.

During my time with the health care system we were blessed with three more children – a daughter – Larkin, a son Gordon Jr., and another daughter Catesby.

In 2001, I returned to private practice and continued working with health care entities and providers assisting them on compliance with the Federal and State laws, rules, regulations, and applicable statutes. I served as Special Counsel for Temporary Detention Orders at Spotsylvania Regional Medical Center from 2005 until 2014. I continued working with the Northwestern Health System Agency and was elected to Chair. When two competing entities were seeking approvals for new hospitals in the area, I was selected by the State to serve as the chair of the public hearings.

During my professional career, I continued to support local charities and non-profits in a variety of roles. I also worked as a middle school field hockey coach.

While my youngest was in high school I was asked to consider putting my name in for a judgeship. As my husband was currently a circuit court judge, I had never considered this as a career option. I was encouraged to do so and was fortunate enough to be selected. The term is for 8 years and I just recently was reappointed. I sit full time in Stafford Circuit Court managing a docket that encompasses both civil and criminal matters, as well as appellate cases from the lower courts, General District and Juvenile and Domestic Relations District courts.

Additionally, I was appointed to serve on the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission and have regularly been appointed to conduct legal professional hearings by the Chief Justice often times serving as the Chief Judge of the Panel. I have conducted Election Dispute Panels for both local and statewide contests as well as National candidates.

I was appointed to the Carrico Professionalism Faculty which puts on the mandatory all-day program for new lawyers as well as lecturing at the area law schools. I also serve as speaker for the Office of Executive Secretary faculty lecturing to new judges on managing juries.

During COVID – I was appointed to the Supreme Court Committee on Resumption of Juries and developed the plan for Stafford which served as the prototype for other localities. Stafford was one of the first localities to resume juries.

I have been endorsed by numerous legal organizations for elevated positions for both State and Federal positions.

My children are all grown now, having successfully graduated from the University of Virginia. I remain committed to motivating women and other minorities to seek careers in the legal field including judgeships.

At my first Circuit Court judges statewide meeting, I was struck by how few women were present. I would like to see growth in this area for women as I feel we are personally uniquely qualified to problem solve proactively.