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ST. THOMAS - V.I. Superior Court Judge Darryl Donohue announced the appointment of four magistrate judges to serve in the newly created Magistrate Division of V.I. Superior Court.

Attorneys Alan Smith and Kathleen Mackay will serve in the court's St. Thomas-St. John Division, and attorneys Miguel Camacho and Jessica Gallivan will serve in the St. Croix Division.

The lower division of the court was created by statute in May 2007, to speed up the movement of cases through the court system and improve the court's efficiency.

Magistrates can hand down jail sentences of six months or less. A magistrate can hear traffic and pretrial matters pending before all divisions of the court to move a case along. With consent of the parties involved and approval of the presiding judge, a magistrate can conduct procedures in any civil matter.

The Magistrate Division will benefit the judicial process immensely, Donohue said.

He said Superior Court judges wear a multitude of hats, handling litter tickets, traffic, small claims, advice of rights, domestic violence hearings and arraignments as well as civil and criminal cases.

"It kind of drags the system down and slows down the public's day in court," Donohue said. "Once things are fully revved up and functioning, the public will realize a faster turnaround."

Law enforcement also will benefit because there will be four more judges able to sign warrants, he said.

The four appointees bring to the court a vast amount of legal experience - more than 85 years combined, according to a Superior Court statement released on Friday.

Smith has practiced in both criminal and civil law for more than 27 years and has served as a public defender and prosecutor and in private practice, according to a V.I. Superior Court statement released on Friday.

Smith also served as Department of Planning and Natural Resources commissioner between 1987 and 1991. Currently, Smith is an attorney with Hodge & Francois law firm on St. Thomas.

Mackay has an extensive civil litigation background spanning 23 years and is currently a partner at Mackay & Hodge on St. Thomas, according to the release.

Previously, she served as a sole practitioner and an associate with the law firm of Hodge & Francois.

Camacho, a former senator from St. Croix in the 22nd Legislature, has served as an assistant attorney general and has dedicated much of his 22-year legal career to criminal defense at the Territorial Public Defender's Office, where he currently works, according to the statement.

Gallivan is the chief labor negotiator for the Office of Collective Bargaining and previously served as an assistant attorney general and a civil practitioner with the Law Office of Michael Sanford. Gallivan is a 13-year member of the Virgin Islands Bar.

Appointees reached by The Daily News on Friday said they were honored and humbled by their selection.

"I feel privileged to serve the community in this way," Smith said.

There will be challenges because it is new for the territory, but they will make it efficient and effective, he said.

Mackay said she looks forward to the job and will do her best to meet the responsibilities that come with the position.

Gallivan declined to comment and Camacho could not be reached Friday for this report.

The last step before the appointees are background checks and Donohue has sent their information to the V.I. Attorney General's Office. Donohue said he will be in touch with Attorney General Vincent Frazer on Monday to get an idea how long that process will take.

Once the background checks are completed, Donohue will begin the employment paperwork for the full-time magistrate positions, which pay \$129,000 a year.

Donohue said he expects the Magistrate Division on St. Croix to begin hearing cases in May and it will be housed at Superior Court.

The Magistrate division on St. Thomas may take longer to organize because the two appointees are private attorneys and will need time to wind down their practices, he said.

The St. Thomas operations could begin in June and will ultimately operate out of offices leased in Barbel Plaza.

- Contact Reporter Tim Fields at [REDACTED] or e-mail [REDACTED]