

New Fourth Circuit Nominee Stephanie Thacker

By Kirsten E. Small

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Just in time for "On the Docket" to return from its summer hiatus ("hiatus" sounds so much more deliberate than "holy cow, I've been busy lately," doesn't it?), President Obama has officially announced a new pick for the Fourth Circuit: Charleston, West Virginia attorney Stephanie Thacker.

On paper, Ms. Thacker looks to be a very good choice for the Fourth Circuit. She has a solid background in civil practice and has handled some very tough cases during her time with the United States Attorney's office and the Department of Justice. As I've [said before](#), I think it's critically important that judges have "real world" experience with the practice of law. There seems to be something of a pattern for nominations out of West Virginia--like Ms. Thacker, Judge Robert King and the late Judge Blane Michael (for whose seat Ms. Thacker is nominated) spent time in private practice and in the U.S. Attorney's office before ascending to the bench.

I spoke with Charleston attorney [Tom Hurney](#), who confirms that reality matches the résumé. "She's a great pick," he said, because of her experience in criminal law and complex civil litigation. He predicted that she will be a "lawyer's judge"--one who has a deep sense of the interplay between legal principle and practical reality.

Now, of course, begins the long slog toward confirmation.