The Honorable Cleo Elaine Powell

The Honorable Cleo Elaine Powell (April 8,1957) recently became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia. She is the first Black woman to serve as the chief justice in Virginia, and is the only member of the state's Supreme Court to have served as a judge at each level of Virginia's judicial branch (local, district, circuit courts, the state appeals court and SCOVA).

A native of Brunswick County, VA., she is an Alumna of the University of Virginia, where she pledged the Kappa Rho Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the University of Virginia School of Law, Powell. has practiced labor and employment law. She served under former Attorney General Mary Sue Terry as a senior assistant attorney general in the Equal Employment Opportunity and Personnel Division.

In an August 2025, statement to the bar announcing Powell's selection as chief justice by her peers, Former Chief Justice Goodwyn said, "Chief Justice-elect Powell is a dedicated jurist who exemplifies integrity, civility and professionalism, and I am confident that she will serve the Court as Chief Justice with the highest distinction," Justice Powell "encourages young people to create a culture of diversity and respect for the law."