

The Chicago Bar Association's

"Judge Smart" Guide

A Voter's Guide to Judicial Candidates



Non-partisan Evaluations for Cook County Judicial Candidates
Provided as a public service by The Chicago Bar Association

Primary Election – March 17, 2026

Downloadable/Printable Guides can be found at:
www.chicagobar.org/votejudges

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATION'S JUDICIAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

By Board resolution, the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) is the semi-autonomous committee of The Chicago Bar Association (CBA) that conducts evaluations of candidates for judicial offices and sitting judges seeking retention within Cook County. As a service to the public, The CBA reports the findings of the JEC for all elections. The evaluations are designed to inform the public and the courts of the qualifications, independence and integrity of judicial candidates. The CBA believes that the quality of the administration of justice in our courts is determined in large part by the quality of our judges.

History

The CBA has a long history of judicial evaluation, dating before the turn-of-the-century, and taking many forms over the years -- from running a "Bar Ticket" in 1887 -- to the present comprehensive procedure adopted in 1976. At that time, a special committee of the Board of Managers, chaired by then CBA President John D. Hayes, recommended a total revamping of the process to minimize political and bar politics, and embrace the concepts of random selection of evaluators and investigators, and to assure the confidentiality of the process and sources.

The CBA Board of Managers regularly reviews and evaluates the procedures and operations of the JEC. The JEC's governing resolution and its guidelines were both revised in 1987. The current guidelines were amended November 19, 2015. The current JEC governing resolution was amended on August 19, 2021.

Scope & Purpose

Judicial candidates and sitting judges who participate in The CBA's screening process are evaluated based on eight criteria: integrity, legal knowledge, legal ability, professional experience, judicial temperament, diligence, punctuality, and health factors.

By providing these findings, along with "The Statements of Reasons," The CBA helps inform and educate the public about the upcoming judicial contests in the general election.

The CBA's 200-member Judicial Evaluation Committee annually invests thousands of volunteer attorney hours in this thorough, comprehensive and diverse peer review process annually evaluating hundreds of candidates for appointive and elective judicial positions within Cook County. The guidelines and standards developed by the 17,000-member CBA for rating judges have been adopted almost entirely by the American Bar Association as a model for local and state bar evaluation programs.

The Investigative Process

The Committee's work begins when the candidate submits his or her completed questionnaire. The 16-page questionnaire for sitting judges requires the candidate to list personal, professional and judicial references and to provide the names of lawyers who have recently appeared before him or her. Candidates with fewer than four years on the bench are also asked to identify adversaries with whom they worked before taking the bench. Lawyer candidates are asked to provide detailed information about their jury and non-jury trial experiences, the names of five judges before whom they have appeared and a list of at least 20 lawyers who have represented adverse positions in matters handled by them.

All candidates are also asked to relate any present or recent health problems and to submit written authorizations signed by their doctors. Complaints against a candidate to the Attorney's Registration and Disciplinary Commission and the Judicial Inquiry Board are to be described, and relevant reports and correspondence submitted with the questionnaire. Criticism of professional misconduct, in any formal civil or criminal proceeding or in the media, must also be reported by the candidate.

The JEC obtained written materials dealing with the candidates' judicial performance from the major newspapers. In several cases, transcripts and other relevant, publicly available documents relating to official investigations of judges and court personnel were obtained from official sources.

The complete file was then assigned to investigators. The investigators conducted personal interviews with the listed legal references. A specially assigned team of investigators reviewed the files of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission and submitted to the investigators and the hearing panel a report on the information disclosed in those files. On completion of the interviews and a review of the file materials, the investigations team completed a comprehensive report regarding the qualifications of the candidate.

The Hearing Process

Hearings were conducted on weeknight evenings. Hearing division members were randomly assigned, in accordance with the JEC resolution, to hearing rooms. Typically, 12 to 15 JEC members were assigned to each room. Only at that time did they learn which candidates they would be evaluating and who the other members of the panel were.

Each member of the hearing panel was provided with a copy of the investigator's report, a copy of the completed questionnaire with all material submitted by the candidate, and copies of any other relevant documents including, in some cases, newspaper clippings and transcripts of court proceedings. Each member and the candidate execute a written oath to keep the nature and content of the report, questioning, and hearing confidential.

The JEC included in its investigation all possible sources of information available to it. However, because the Committee cannot compel the production of evidence or the attendance of witnesses before it nor, understandably, expect disclosure by the authorities of evidence discovered in pending investigations, the JEC cannot be assured that it has uncovered all the evidence which, in the future, may lead to formal charges. Within its authority, the JEC develops the most complete record available and gives careful and thoughtful consideration to the available evidence.

A member of the Executive Committee chaired each hearing. The candidate was advised of the procedures to be employed at the hearing and then questioned at length by the chair regarding abilities, experiences, perceived strengths and weaknesses and, where appropriate, specific problems disclosed in the investigation. The chair then invited questions from members of the hearing panel. The candidate was then given an opportunity to make any statement on their own behalf. On excusing the candidate from the hearing, the chair then opened the floor to discuss the candidate's qualifications among the panel members. Only after the members had been given the opportunity to openly voice their opinions was the issue of the finding of the JEC put to a vote.

The Vote

The hearing panel members voted by secret ballot and were asked to rate the candidate as "Highly Qualified," "Qualified" or "Not Recommended." The JEC's governing resolution provides that to be found "Highly Qualified," the candidate must receive that rating on 80% of the ballots. To be found "Qualified" the candidate must receive a favorable rating on 60% of the ballots. The failure of a candidate to receive 60 percent affirmative vote results in a finding of "Not Recommended." Each hearing panel member was also asked for written comments on the candidate's qualifications, areas worthy of commendation and areas of needed improvement. Following a tabulation of the vote, the chair reviewed and capsulized the written comments in preparing the statement of reasons given in support of the Committee's finding.

The Appellate Review Committee

On July 12, 1990, The Chicago Bar Association's Board of Managers adopted procedures establishing a separate Appellate Review Committee to act independently from the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC).

The Appellate Review Committee was recommended by a special committee appointed by past president Chester L. Blair. The committee hears appeals only from candidates who receive a "Not Recommended" rating from the JEC.

The candidate may request a re-evaluation by the appellate committee only on the basis that the candidate believes that errors or omissions were made in the original screening process.

The Resolution adopted by the CBA's Board of Managers provides that "A re-evaluation shall only be ordered on a determination that the Judicial Evaluation Committee's Hearing Division's findings were clearly erroneous. A re-evaluation shall not be ordered solely because the Appellate Review Panel disagrees with the Judicial Evaluation Committee's findings."

The Appellate Review Committee's authority will be limited to directing that the candidate be given a new hearing by the JEC or denying the appeal.

Prior to the formation of the new Appellate Review Committee, all appeals were handled within the JEC. These new appellate procedures only apply to candidates evaluated by the JEC after July 12, 1990.

Reporting Findings

The CBA has always reported its JEC findings to the public for all elective judicial positions.

On February 19, 1987, The CBA Board of Managers amended the JEC governing resolution to provide publication of "Statements of Reasons" for all such elective positions and specified appointive positions, such as associate judgeships.

**THE CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATION FINDINGS FOR ILLINOIS
APPELLATE COURT VACANCIES**

On February 10, 2026, The Chicago Bar Association released the results of independent screening for one judicial candidate seeking election to the Illinois Appellate Court in the March 17, 2026, primary election. The candidate was screened by the Judicial Evaluation Committee of the CBA and was found “Qualified.”

1ST APPELLATE COURT – HOFFMAN VACANCY

JUDITH C. RICE

QUALIFIED

Judge C. Judith Rice is "Qualified" for the office of Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court. Judge Rice was admitted to practice law in 1988. She has been a judge since 2014. Judge Rice is the Acting Presiding Judge of the Domestic Violence Division. Prior to becoming a judge, she served in executive positions at BMO Harris Bank, was the Chicago City Treasurer, served as an assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago, and as a prosecutor with the Cook County State's Attorney's office. Judge Rice is well regarded for her integrity, temperament, work ethic and diligence.

**THE CHICAGO BAR ASSOCIATIONS FINDINGS
FOR COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT AND SUBCIRCUIT VACANCIES**

On February 10, 2026, The Chicago Bar Association released the results of independent screenings for the 45 judicial candidates seeking Cook County Circuit Court positions in the March 17, 2026, primary election. Of the 45 circuit court candidates running, 37 were screened by the CBA’s Judicial Evaluation Committee. Of those 37, the JEC rated two as “Highly Qualified,” 31 as “Qualified,” and 12 as “Not Recommended.” The twelve “Not Recommended” candidates include eight candidates who declined to participate in the JEC screening process and were found automatically “Not Recommended” pursuant to JEC governing bylaws.

NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF STATEMENTS OF REASONS FOR EACH CIRCUIT AND SUBCIRCUIT COURT CANDIDATE

FINDINGS FOR COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT VACANCIES

CIRCUIT COURT - BURKE VACANCY

STEVEN Q. MCKENZIE

QUALIFIED

Steven Q. McKenzie is "Qualified" for the office of circuit court judge. Mr. McKenzie was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1997. Since 2006, he has been a supervising assistant corporation counsel, primarily dealing with housing and building code issues. He has also been involved in writing proposed legislation regarding those issues. His references were uniformly positive, noting that as a prosecutor he focused less on technical violations and more on achieving remedies that promoted public safety. Although the majority of his professional experience has been in a niche area of practice, we find that he possesses the requisite qualifications to serve as Circuit Court Judge.

CIRCUIT COURT - COBBS VACANCY

LIZ MARIA TOLEDO

QUALIFIED

Luz Toledo is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Toledo was admitted to practice in 2006. She is an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney assigned to the Real Estate and Tax Litigation Division. She previously served in the Appeals Division and spent 12 years prosecuting misdemeanor and felony cases. Ms. Toledo is well-respected for her legal knowledge and ability, as well as her calm temperament and demeanor.

LINDA SACKEY

QUALIFIED

Judge Linda Sackey is "Qualified" for the office of circuit court judge. Judge Sackey was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2006 and has served on the bench since January 2025. Prior to her appointment, she had a diverse array of legal experience including in private practice and in the Illinois attorney general's office. Immediately prior to her judicial appointment, she clerked for Illinois supreme court justice Mary Jane Theis. Judge Sackey is well regarded for her legal knowledge and ability and her excellent demeanor and calm temperament.

CIRCUIT COURT - COGHLAN VACANCY

ASHONTA C. RICE

QUALIFIED

Ashonta C. Rice is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Rice was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2005. She began her career in the Cook County Public Guardian's Office where she served for three years. For the last 18 years, she has been in private practice primarily in the areas of family law, child protection litigation, and guardianship. She possesses the litigation experience along with the temperament and demeanor necessary to serve effectively as a Circuit Court Judge.

MICHAEL CABONARGI

QUALIFIED

Michael Carbonargi is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Carbonargi was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2001. He has a broad range of high-level legal experience and is currently serving as Counsel to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. Mr. Carbonargi is well respected for his legal knowledge, his calm and professional demeanor and his integrity. He possesses the requisite qualifications to serve as a Circuit Court Judge.

CIRCUIT COURT - HOOKS VACANCY

AVA GEORGE STEWART

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee's Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a "Qualified" rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

CIRCUIT COURT – KARKULA VACANCY

D'ANTHONY "TONY" THEDFORD

HIGHLY QUALIFIED

D'Anthony "Tony" Thedford is "Highly Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Thedford was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1997. Mr. Thedford began his practice as a Cook County Public Defender and is currently in private practice. He has extensive experience in both criminal and civil litigation. He has demonstrated strong legal experience in his trial work as well as the variety of substantive legal areas he has litigated. Mr. Thedford is well regarded for his knowledge of the law, work ethic, diligence, and fine demeanor.

1ST SUBCIRCUIT - BALANOFF VACANCY

RADIANCE WARD

HIGHLY QUALIFIED

Radiance Ward is "Highly Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Ward was admitted to practice law in 2007. She began her career as a solo practitioner handling family law case, before joining a Legal Aid group helping victims of domestic violence. She subsequently worked for the Cook County Circuit Court as a staff attorney. For the past 12 years, Ms. Ward has been an Assistant Public Defender, working her way up the ranks to where she now primarily handles murder cases at the Leighton Criminal Courts Building. She also is an adjunct Professor at Loyola and coaches a mock trial team. Ms. Ward is highly respected for her integrity, courtroom experience, legal knowledge, and her ability to empathize with litigants.

NATALIE L. HOWSE

NOT RECOMMENDED

Natalie L. Howse declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association's governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found NOT RECOMMENDED."

1ST SUBCIRCUIT - WALKER VACANCY

ASHLEY GREER SHAMBLEY

QUALIFIED

Ashley Shambley is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Shambley was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2010. She has over 14 years of experience as a public defender, handling complex homicide cases. Ms. Shambley is actively involved in her community and various charities and has a deep level of commitment to public service. She is respected for her integrity, knowledge of the law, and excellent demeanor and possesses the requisite qualifications to serve as a Circuit Court Judge.

GINGER ODOM

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee's Governing Resolution, the JEC Executive Committee has voted to issue a "Qualified" rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

TIFFANY BROOKS

NOT RECOMMENDED

Tiffany Brooks declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association's governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found NOT RECOMMENDED."

3RD SUBCIRCUIT – MURPHY VACANCY

JOHN CARROLL

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee's Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a "Qualified" rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

3RD SUBCIRCUIT – SHERLOCK VACANCY

MARTIN DOUGLAS REGGI

NOT RECOMMENDED

Martin Douglas Reggi is "Not Recommended" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Reggi has practiced law since 1990. Most of his experience is in criminal defense, although he has recently done some civil work. The Committee has concerns about Mr. Reggi's organizational skills and whether he could manage a call and listen to evidence and arguments and organize facts properly to analyze them and apply the law.

RACHEL MARRELLO

NOT RECOMMENDED

Rachel S. Marrello is "Not Recommended" for the office of Circuit Judge. Ms. Marrello was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2000. Currently, she is employed by Cook County Health as in-house labor and employment counsel. Ms. Marrello is articulate, has excellent demeanor, and works well with people. She has handled many intricate aspects of public administration. She served as an elected suburban school board member for four years.

Although Ms. Marrello handled simple arbitrations and assisted with litigation matters early in her career, she has never tried a case and lacks the trial court experience required to serve as a Circuit Judge.

5TH SUBCIRCUIT – ROSS VACANCY

STEPHANIE S. KELLY

NOT RECOMMENDED

Stephanie S. Kelly declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association’s governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found NOT RECOMMENDED.”

8TH SUBCIRCUIT – GAMRATH VACANCY

KATHLEEN CUNNIFF ORI

QUALIFIED

Kathleen Cunniff Ori is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Ori was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2007. She began her legal career as a law clerk initially for Judge Michael M. Mihm of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois and then for Judge William J. Bauer of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. She then was in private practice prior to joining the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, where she currently serves as Deputy Supervisor in Labor and Employment. Ms. Ori is committed to community service and is highly regarded for her integrity, legal knowledge and trial experience, and temperament. She possesses the requisite qualifications for service as a Circuit Court Judge.

ELIZABETH CHRISTINA DIBLER

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association’s Judicial Evaluation Committee’s Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a “Qualified” rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

GARSON FISCHER

QUALIFIED

Garson Fischer is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Fischer was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2005. He has been an attorney in the Illinois Attorney General’s Office since 2005. He currently serves as Deputy Chief for Criminal Appeals. Mr. Fischer possesses extensive knowledge of criminal law and demonstrates a calm and thoughtful temperament. He presents as intelligent, articulate, and carries himself with professionalism. His demeanor is well suited for the bench. Mr. Fischer possesses the requisite qualifications for service as a Circuit Court Judge.

8TH SUBCIRCUIT –MIKVA VACANCY

LESTER FINKLE

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association’s Judicial Evaluation Committee’s Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a “Qualified” rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

DAN BALANOFF

NOT RECOMMENDED

Daniel C. Balanoff is “Not Recommended” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Balanoff was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2007. He is a solo practitioner representing clients in bankruptcy, probate, real estate and estate planning matters. He also served as Chief Legal Officer for the Cook County Board of Review, District 2. Mr. Balanoff’s dedication to community service and pro bono work is commendable and reflects a strong commitment to public interest.

Mr. Balanoff was the subject of an employment discrimination suit in which he and his Board of Review supervisor were sued. The case was quickly settled and no findings resulted. In addition, Mr. Balanoff was found to have violated the Cook County ethics code in connection with his role on the tax board. He dismissed the ethics board findings as politically motivated. Both matters are recent and raise concerns regarding his judgment.

Additionally, while Mr. Balanoff’s work at the tax board provided some trial experience, those matters were relatively limited in scope and brief in duration. Broader and more substantive litigation experience, particularly in jury trials and complex legal issues, would provide a stronger foundation for confident, well-informed judicial decision-making in more legally intricate matters.

KATHERINE CAROLE MORRISON

QUALIFIED

Katherine Carole Morrison is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Morrison was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2012. She has been involved in various other organizations, including the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois, The Chicago Bar Association, and Lawyers Lend-A-Hand. She is a partner at Burns Noland LLP, where she has practiced personal injury and civil rights cases on the defense side. Ms. Morrison has an impressive background regarding high-end legal work regarding nursing home cases. She received high praise for her intelligence, diligence, and legal knowledge

11TH SUBCIRCUIT – MEYERSON VACANCY

JARRETT KNOX

QUALIFIED

Jarrett M. Knox is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Knox was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2008. His practice has had a primary focus in public guardianship and child protection. He is held in high regard by his adversaries, particularly for his integrity and professional demeanor. His ability to remain calm, balanced, and measured in emotionally

charged cases involving minors, abuse, and neglect underscores his strong judicial temperament and makes him exceptionally well suited for service on the Circuit Court bench.

JOHN R. CARROZZA

QUALIFIED

John R. Carrozza is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Judge. Mr. Carrozza was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2005. He has been practicing law in a variety of practice areas, including criminal defense, breach of contract, mechanic's lien, probate and real estate. He has a strong devotion to public service, as evidenced by his involvement in volunteer efforts that benefit the disadvantaged and people with disabilities. He is well respected by judges, colleagues, and adversaries for his legal knowledge and ability.

11TH SUBCIRCUIT – ROBERTS VACANCY

KIM PRZEKOTA

QUALIFIED

Kimberly Przekota is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Judge. Ms. Przekota was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2008. Since then, she has been an Assistant Cook County State's Attorney and is currently a first chair Assistant in a felony courtroom, trying serious felonies including homicide. She has considerable practice experience and is highly regarded by her adversaries and judges before whom she has appeared. Ms. Przekota is well regarded for her professionalism, even in highly charged, emotional matters.

13TH SUBCIRCUIT – CURRY, JR. VACANCY

ROBERT "BOB" GROEBNER

QUALIFIED

Robert Groebner is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Groebner was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1999 and has served as an Assistant State's Attorney for his entire career. He has had many assignments, including as a misdemeanor and felony trial assistant. For the past 11 years, he has been assigned to preliminary hearings, bond court, and pre-trial release hearings. Mr. Groebner is well respected by judges whom he appears before, colleagues and adversaries. He has substantial trial and litigation experience and has a strong knowledge of criminal law and the research skills to learn new areas. He is also noted for his good demeanor and temperament.

13TH SUBCIRCUIT – M. KELLEY VACANCY

BRITTANY MICHELLE PEDERSON

QUALIFIED

Brittany Michelle Pedersen is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Pedersen was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2009. She is currently a trial attorney focusing primarily on criminal defense, representing individuals charged with both misdemeanor and felony offenses. She is highly regarded for her commitment to pro bono service and active community involvement. Ms. Pedersen possesses a solid foundation of trial and legal experience and is well-respected for her legal ability, diligence, and demeanor.

13TH SUBCIRCUIT – T. KELLEY VACANCY

WILLIAM F. KELLEY

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association’s Judicial Evaluation Committee’s Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a “Qualified” rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

13TH SUBCIRCUIT – O’MALLEY VACANCY

DAN NARANJO

QUALIFIED

Dan Naranjo is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Naranjo was admitted to practice law in Florida in 1997 and in Illinois in 1998. He joined the Cook County Public Defender’s Office in 2000. He has handled misdemeanor and felony matters and is currently assigned to the Multiple Defendant Division. Mr. Naranjo is respected by lawyers and judges before whom he has appeared for his calm demeanor, legal knowledge and diligence. Daniel Naranjo is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge.

16TH SUBCIRCUIT – BAIRD VACANCY

JULIAN SANCHEZ CROZIER

QUALIFIED

Julian Sanchez Crozier is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Crozier was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2013. He worked as an Assistant State’s Attorney for five years. He has been a partner at Ciesielski, Soukaras, and Crozier Law, LLC for seven years handling criminal defense. Mr. Crozier has considerable trial experience in both civil and criminal courts. He is well regarded for his knowledge of the law, demeanor and temperament, and possesses the requisite qualifications to serve as a Circuit Court Judge.

16TH SUBCIRCUIT – MENDOZA VACANCY

JESSICA KARINA VELEZ

NOT RECOMMENDED

Jessica Karina Velez is “Not Recommended” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Velez was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2012. She is currently the Deputy General Counsel at the Illinois Comptroller’s Office. Prior to that, she worked at two tort defense firms. The Committee was impressed with the candidate’s integrity, diligence, judicial temperament, and punctuality as well as her dedication to the legal community. However, the candidate is not a seasoned litigator with the depth of complex litigation experience that is required to be a judge. The Committee believes that the candidate can reach the level of experience required with more trial experience.

17TH SUBCIRCUIT – BROOKS VACANCY

NATALIA MOORE

NOT RECOMMENDED

Natalia Moore declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association’s governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found “NOT RECOMMENDED.”

MERIDITH HAMMER

NOT RECOMMENDED

Meridith Hammer declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association’s governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found “NOT RECOMMENDED.”

17TH SUBCIRCUIT - CARROLL VACANCY

AMARI DAWSON

NOT RECOMMENDED

Amari Dawson declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association’s governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found “NOT RECOMMENDED.”

BIANCE B. BROWN

QUALIFIED

Bianca B. Brown is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. Brown was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2010. She spent 14 years working at public agencies, including the City of Chicago, the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office and the CTA. She is now in private practice. Ms. Brown has been extremely active in bar association activities and has demonstrated a commitment to public service. She has vast trial experience, and is knowledgeable, even-handed, and well suited to serve as a judge.

ANDRÉ THAPEDI

NOT RECOMMENDED

André Thapedi declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association’s governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found NOT RECOMMENDED.”

18TH SUBCIRCUIT – CHRONES VACANCY

JUAN PONCE DE LEON

QUALIFIED

Juan Ponce de Leon is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Ponce de Leon was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2009. He has 15 years of experience with the Cook County Office of the Public Defender, where he was initially assigned to child protection for three years, followed by two years in juvenile justice, and for the last 10 years he has been assigned to felony courtrooms. He is well respected for his integrity, excellent temperament, and knowledge of the law.

18TH SUBCIRCUIT – ANDREOU VACANCY

SAM BAE

QUALIFIED

Sam Bae is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Bae was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1999. He is currently a solo practitioner whose general practice concentrates in personal injury, family law, business litigation and civil litigation. He is well respected for his legal knowledge, integrity, diligence and fine temperament.

19TH SUBCIRCUIT – FAIRMAN VACANCY

SARA MCGANN

QUALIFIED

Sara McGann is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Ms. McGann was admitted to practice law in 2009. She is an Assistant State's Attorney in Cook County assigned to the Appeals Division. Ms. McGann is committed to public service. She is well respected for her demeanor and knowledge of the law and possesses all the requisite qualifications for service as a Cook County Judge.

19TH SUBCIRCUIT – KANE VACANCY

MONICA SOMERVILLE

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee's Governing Resolution, the JEC Executive Committee has voted to issue a "Qualified" rating for Monica Gail Somerville's current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

JOHN HARKINS

NOT RECOMENDED

John Harkins declined to participate in the Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) screening process and, therefore, according to The Chicago Bar Association's governing resolution for the JEC, is automatically found "NOT RECOMMENDED."

DAVE CONDRON

QUALIFIED

David Condron is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Condron was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 2001. He began his 16-year career at the Cook County State's Attorney's office, handling criminal matters, including in the Public Corruption and Financial Crimes Unit and Special Prosecutions, before moving to the Civil Actions Bureau. Mr. Condron subsequently went into private practice, where he handled matters involving commercial real estate and complex construction. Currently, he is an Assistant Corporation Counsel Supervisor with the City of Chicago's Law Department, dealing with excessive force claims. Mr. Condron is well respected for his calm and professional temperament, his legal knowledge, and his experience in both complex civil and criminal litigation matters.

20TH SUBCIRCUIT – HARACZ VACANCY

MICHAEL J. ZINK

QUALIFIED

Michael J. Zink is “Qualified” for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Zink was admitted to practice law in November 2004. Mr. Zink is currently in private practice. The candidate has extensive legal experience, his references praise his temperament, and he has a strong history of performing community service. Mr. Zink is qualified to serve as a judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County.

20TH SUBCIRCUIT – MILLER VACANCY

JON STROMSTA

QUALIFIED

Jon Stromsta is "Qualified" for the office of Circuit Court Judge. Mr. Stromsta was admitted to practice law in Illinois in 1985. Mr. Stromsta worked in private practice with a focus on civil litigation and appeals, family law, and criminal defense. He is currently an Administrative Law Judge at the Illinois Department of Employment Security, where he conducts benefit appeals, evidentiary hearings, drafts decisions and review hearings, and prepares opinions for the Board of Review. He is well regarded for his temperament and possesses the requisite qualifications to serve as a Circuit Court Judge.

BELLE KATUBIG

QUALIFIED

Pursuant to Section 34 of The Chicago Bar Association’s Judicial Evaluation Committee’s Governing Resolution, The Executive Committee has voted to issue a “Qualified” rating for your current Circuit Court Judge candidacy.

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