

Judicial Candidate Evaluation Process

This is a brief summary of the King County Bar Association judicial candidate evaluation process for contested judicial elections and appointments.

The KCBA utilizes a representative body of its membership in this 85 member panel, to engage in an objective and comprehensive evaluation process designed to promote a high quality bench, and to assist the public by providing important information on judicial candidates in elections. The KCBA conducts evaluations for election and appointment for King County Courts of Limited Jurisdiction and Superior Court. The KCBA conducts evaluations for contested elections only for the Court of Appeals – Division I and the Washington State Supreme Court.

Several tools are used in the evaluation process including the Governor’s Uniform Questionnaire, the KCBA supplemental questionnaire, a writing sample, an interview of the candidate, and reference checks. All required forms can be downloaded from the KCBA website at <http://www.kcba.org/For-Lawyers/Judicial-Resources/Judicial-Candidate-Evaluation-Ratings>. Candidates are asked to sign a release of information for WSBA disciplinary records as part of the KCBA supplemental questionnaire. For sitting judges, public Judicial Conduct Commission records are reviewed.

A copy of the KCBA Judicial Candidate Evaluation Screening Committee rules and procedures is also available on the website. **It is strongly recommended that you review the rules prior to submitting an application.**

Once you have completed all the evaluation materials, send them electronically to Anne Daly at AnneD@kcba.org and Molly Gough at MollyG@kcba.org. You do not need to mail a hard copy. Once all your materials have been received, you will be scheduled for an interview with the Judicial Candidate Committee. Candidates may request a rating for one or multiple levels of the court.

Evaluation sessions are held two times a month, with 2-3 people evaluated at each session. Typically sessions are filled 2-3 months in advance. This means you should plan on submitting your materials and requesting a rating at least 8-12 weeks in advance of when you need your rating. For those considering an appointment to the bench, it is recommended you obtain a rating in advance a position becoming available. Due to the fairly quick turn-around time of appointments, especially in courts of limited jurisdiction, and the volume of individuals seeking appointment to open seats, ratings for appointment should be sought well in advance of a vacancy occurring.

About three weeks prior to your scheduled interview, committee members will be provided with your materials and assigned references to contact. References are advised of the confidential nature of the inquiry and their responses. All references are contacted by phone. We do not conduct reference checks by email. Because of the time required to contact all listed references, it is not possible to simply “plug” another candidate into a session slot when there is a cancellation.

A quorum of at least 12 committee members will be present at your scheduled interview. The interview will typically last 30 minutes and you will be given the opportunity to make some brief opening and closing comments. The areas of questions asked by the committee will vary from candidate to candidate however, they will focus on the same areas of judicial qualifications (objectivity; temperament; legal/trial/judicial experience; etc.) The committee may ask you to comment on concerns, if any, which have been brought to their attention during the reference check process.

Immediately following your interview, those committee members present at your interview will discuss your qualifications and vote on your rating.

The reference checks, your interview, and the committee deliberations are confidential and the information obtained during the process is not disclosed. During the reference check process, committee members will disclose your name and level(s) of court for which you are seeking a rating.

In issuing a rating, the Committee will take your completed questionnaire; writing sample; reference checks and your interview into consideration. The Committee may also take other sources of information into account, such as published opinions, referrals to other references, or disciplinary action.

Letters of recommendation will not be provided to or considered by the committee nor will supplemental materials such as journal articles other publications, other than the requested writing sample.

It is the candidate's responsibility to provide accurate contact information for listed references and to provide any updates to the submitted questionnaire.

Candidates will be notified of their rating within 24 hours of their evaluation session. A letter confirming the rating will be sent to the candidate as well.

Candidates are encouraged to read the KCBA Judicial Candidate Evaluation Screening Committee rules and procedures and to familiarize themselves with the criteria for each rating, prior to submitting their materials.

The KCBA publishes ratings for any candidate who has filed election paperwork with the state Public Disclosure Commission of the King County Elections Department. Ratings for appointment are shared with the appointing authority, however they are not published or shared publically.

The KCBA Judicial Candidate Evaluation Committee has a diverse membership with regard to gender, race, age, type of practice, size of firm, geographic, and other factors considered relevant. Members at an individual evaluation session are selected ad hoc from the overall committee roster. Additionally, the committee roster includes a dozen non-attorney members and up to 2 non-attorneys may participate in a candidate's evaluation session.

KCBA realizes our process is a demanding one and we appreciate the time and taken by both candidates and committee members to ensure a high quality bench.

Source, King County Bar Association:

<http://www.kcba.org/Portals/0/judicial/pdf/Judicial%20Candidate%20Evaluation%20Process.pdf>