

**WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF LAWYERS  
POLICY FOR SUPPORTING JUDICIAL CANDIDATES**

**I. Goals**

The principal goal of the Washington Council of Lawyers (WCL) in supporting judicial candidates is to encourage the appointment of local and federal judges in the District of Columbia who are committed to equal access to justice and adequate representation for all who appear before the courts. We will support candidates who demonstrate a commitment to pro bono and public interest legal services, and to protecting the rights of all litigants before the courts.

**II. Criteria for Support**

A. **WCL Membership:** During the initial phase of the selection process for judicial candidates, the Council will consider supporting candidates whose commitment to pro bono and public interest legal services is widely known to multiple board members, and will give special consideration to candidates who have been active WCL members for at least one year. WCL membership is not required to obtain the Council's support for a candidate whose name has been forwarded by the Judicial Nomination Commission to the White House for selection, but may be considered in deciding whether to support that candidate.

B. **Qualifications:** The WCL will consider candidates for support based on their general qualifications for the bench and also:

1. their personal involvement in the provision of pro bono and public interest

- legal services;
- 2. their efforts to promote equal access to justice and adequate representation for all litigants;
- 3. their demonstrated commitment to the District of Columbia community;
- 4. their demonstrated commitment to equal justice under law; and
- 5. their demonstrated freedom from personal bias.

### **III. Procedures for Persons Seeking Endorsement**

Persons seeking the Council's support for themselves must comply with the following procedures. Persons seeking the Council's support for another must provide the WCL with confirmation from the candidate that she or he desires the Council's support and must ensure compliance on behalf of the candidate with the following procedures.

A. Inform the chair or any co-chair of the Judicial Nomination Committee of his or her interest in having the WCL support him/herself or another person. A copy of these guidelines will be provided to every person expressing such interest.

B. Forward the following information to the Committee co-chair:

- 1. Judicial position sought;
- 2. Date by which the support for the appointment must be received in order to be considered;
- 3. Name, title business address, email address, and/or fax number of the person to whom the letter of support should be sent;
- 4. Resume of the candidate;

5. Completed WCL Judicial Nominations questionnaire;
6. Name, business address, telephone number, email address, and/or fax number of one reference who has personal knowledge of the candidate's involvement in pro bono and public interest legal services (a WCL board member may serve as the candidate's reference); and
7. Any additional information the candidate deems pertinent to the criteria set forth above.

Nothing in these guidelines is meant to prohibit any WCL member from encouraging a candidate for a judgeship to seek WCL support.

#### **IV. Procedures for Judicial Nominations Committee and Board**

- A. The chair or a co-chair will designate a committee member (which may include the chair or a co-chair) to assemble and evaluate the information to be considered with respect to the candidate.
- B. The committee member will contact the nominee's reference. The reference may request that his or her comments be kept confidential.
- C. The committee member may in his or her discretion interview the candidate.
- D. In consultation with the committee, the chair or co-chairs will decide whether to recommend support for the candidate to the WCL Board. The decision will be made at a meeting of the committee, by a majority vote of the members present. To the extent feasible, written information concerning the candidate will be made available prior to a vote.
- E. For each candidate seeking support, the committee will forward to the President

of the Council a recommendation, a brief explanation of the recommendation, the candidate's resume and WCL questionnaire, and any other materials the committee deems helpful. The committee may also forward a draft letter of support.

F. The Board of the WCL will consider the recommendations of the committee at the next regularly scheduled meeting. When time does not permit delaying consideration until the next regularly scheduled meeting, the President of the Council will determine the procedures to be followed in considering the request for support, consistent with WCL bylaws.

G. After an affirmative vote, the WCL president will send a letter of support on behalf of WCL with a copy to the candidate. In the event of a negative vote, the chair or a co-chair will inform the candidate.

## **V. Timing of Support**

The WCL will consider supporting candidates for judicial appointment at three stages in the judicial selection process: during initial consideration by the local or federal judicial nomination commission; following referral of a set of recommended candidates to the U.S. President; and during consideration of a judicial nomination by the U.S. Senate.

A. During initial consideration by the commission, the WCL will consider offering its support to any candidate who requests it and who has been an active member for at least one year or whose commitment to pro bono and public interest legal services is widely known to multiple board members. The WCL may support as many candidates for a judgeship as it deems worthy of a letter of support. The WCL also may decide not to support any of the candidates who request support.

B. Once a set of recommended candidates has been forwarded to the White House, the WCL may support as many candidates for a judgeship as it deems worthy of support, may choose to express its preference among the candidates, or may decide not to support any of the candidates. If WCL decides not to express a preference among the candidates recommended to the White House, WCL may instead notify the White House of its prior support of one or more of the candidates by providing the White House with its prior letter of support under a brief cover letter.

C. Once a candidate has been nominated by the U.S. President for a judgeship, the WCL may consider expressing its view of a candidate's qualifications to the Senate. Letters of support for the nomination may be sent to the relevant Senate Committee and/or to all members of the Senate. No letter of support shall be sent without the nominee's consent.

## **VI. Disclosure of Personal or Professional Relationships**

Any member of the Judicial Nomination Committee or of the Board of the WCL who has a personal or professional relationship with a candidate may participate in the discussion about whether to support that person and participate in any votes on the matter, but must advise the chair(s) of the Committee about that relationship prior to any votes pertaining to the candidate.

## **VII. Confidentiality**

All documents assembled during the consideration of a candidate for support remain the property of the WCL and will be maintained in the custody of the co-chairs. The information so assembled will not be disclosed except to members of the Board and the Judicial Nominations

Committee, unless such disclosure is warranted by the preparation of a letter of support. Upon termination of the chairmanship of the co-chairs, the committee's materials shall be turned over to the new co-chairs or returned to the WCL's Executive Director, as appropriate.

#### **VIII. Modification of Guidelines**

These procedures may be modified by the WCL president or the co-chairs in the event circumstances warrant such modification and may be waived by the Board in its discretion.

APPROVED:

Board of Directors  
Washington Council of Lawyers  
September 12, 2013

REQUEST FOR WCL LETTER OF SUPPORT  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Office for which support is sought: \_\_\_\_\_

Date by which support is sought: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please describe your personal involvement in the provision of pro bono and public interest legal services during your career:

2. Please describe activities that demonstrate your personal commitment to equal access to justice and adequate legal representation for all litigants:

3. Please describe any other professional, civic, or other activities through which you have made a significant contribution to the District of Columbia community:

(Additional sheets may be used to complete your answers)