

Seminar Content

WHERE DO JUDGES COME FROM?

Sponsored by the
Court of Appeal, *[District Number]* Appellate District,
Superior Court of California, County *[or Counties]* of *[County]*, and
the *[Bar Association(s)]* Bar Association(s)
[Date]
11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
[Place]

A. Purpose of the Seminar

- Help demystify the appointment or election process for attorneys interested in a career in the judiciary.
- Help attorneys develop a career action plan to become judges.
- Foster links between local and specialty bar associations and the judiciary.

B. Seminar Objectives

- Highlight the risks and rewards of a judicial career.
- Assist participants in conducting confidential self-assessments to determine their suitability for a judicial career.
- Chart various courses to judicial appointment or election.
- Acquaint attorneys with the judicial evaluation process.
- Educate attorneys about judicial ethics.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to meet and speak with judges and others involved in judicial evaluations.
- Provide a starting point for mentoring relationships.

C. Agenda for a Half-Day Program (11:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

11:30 to 12:00 p.m. **Registration**

12:00 to 1:00 p.m. **Lunch/Welcome and Introduction of the Keynote Speaker/Address**

- A local judge, preferably the presiding judge, should open the program and act as moderator for the day.
- A Supreme Court or appellate court justice or a superior court judge should be the keynote speaker. Talking points might include the speaker's personal journey to the bench, the intangible rewards of judges' service to the public, the role judges play in instilling public trust and confidence in the courts, how diversity improves decision-making as well as public trust, the likely concerns of the attendees

about seeking judicial appointment, and other words of wisdom and encouragement.

1:00 to 1:30 p.m.

Purpose, Objectives, Overview of the Day, Self-Assessment

- Moderator briefly describes the objectives of the conference and how the day will proceed.
- Moderator describes purpose of self-assessment. [Make the point that being a judge may seem like an attractive career path, but it is not for everyone; the self-assessment is designed to help participants honestly assess their motivations, qualifications, and abilities (or lack thereof) to be a bench officer and whether the bench would be a good career choice.]
- Participants are given 15 minutes to complete the self-assessment that only they will see *[attached]*.

1:30 to 2:10 p.m.

What Judges Do and Their Ethical Obligations

- Presenters should be superior court judges.
- Describe the judicial decision-making process and what adjustments must be made from advocate to judge.
- Describe the more challenging and boring aspects of a judicial career, including the “early” assignments in high-volume departments with primarily self-represented litigants.
- Discuss the primary ethical obligations and the extent to which there are constraints on judges regarding political activity, speech, membership in certain clubs, and the appearance of impropriety.
- Hold a Q & A session with participants.

2:10 to 2:20 p.m.

Break

2:20 to 4:05 p.m.

How to Chart a Path to Optimize Your Opportunities for a Judicial Career

Presenters should be judges who ran for election; judges who were appointed *[try to get different perspectives from judges who were appointed by different governors]*; a member (or former member) of the JNE; a member (or former member) of the local bar judicial evaluation committee; if possible, the current or a former Judicial Appointments Secretary; if possible, a current or former member of the Governor’s local advisory committee.

- Program materials should include a copy of the current version of the Personal Data Questionnaire (PDQ), a copy of the JNE evaluation form, any local bar judicial evaluation form, and any specialty bar

judicial evaluation form (e.g., California Women Lawyers, Charles Houston Bar Association, La Raza).

- Part one of the panel discussion includes the following topics:
 - Application process; how to get “out of the drawer”—i.e., what the Governor’s advisory committee and the Judicial Appointments Secretary are looking for.
 - JNE evaluation: What are the qualifications and why; what does the commission look for; what do the ratings mean; how long does it take? What rules does JNE follow? What are its guidelines?
 - *Brief* discussion of elections as an alternative: To challenge or not to challenge a sitting judge [*pros, cons—do not advocate for either position*]; how an open seat is created; how much an election costs in this county; the hard realities of running for office.
- Part two of the panel discussion describes how to build the qualifications that will increase the chances for appointment and might include, among other topics:
 - Developing excellence in the attorney’s field of practice; publishing articles; teaching and lecturing.
 - Pursuing public service and leadership, e.g., in bar associations, other professional associations, local government, schools, charitable and philanthropic organizations (the arts, children’s programs, etc.) and political organizations [*discuss pros and cons of being active in party politics*].
 - Demonstrating commitment to the justice system: pro bono representation; volunteer as a temporary judge or as a mediator; active participation in bench-bar activities; membership in task forces to improve delivery of legal services.
 - Developing a system to keep track of all of your accomplishments, including trials (jury and nonjury), significant cases that resolve before trial (including names and addresses of opposing counsel), and professional, scholarly, and charitable activities. (This effort will make filling out the PDQ significantly easier.)
 - Assessing (and then improving, if necessary) your character and professional reputation: Are you courteous to opposing counsel? (Remember that they will receive a JNE evaluation form.) Do you recognize those with whom you work and share the credit for a job well done? Are you controlling rather than collaborative? Do you have a “judicial temperament”? [*Relate all of these issues to the self-assessment they completed.*]

- Develop a friendship with a judge so you can know what the job of judging is all about and whether you are well suited to it. If there is a local mentoring program, apply for a judge-mentor.

4:05 to 4:10 p.m. **Closing Remarks**

4:10 to 5:00 p.m. **One-on-One Sessions** *[Optional]*

- Participants meet and speak one on one with judges and other presenters who have committed to do so. *[Provide a sign-up sheet at registration.]*
- *[Optional: Make applications to mentoring program available to participants.]*