

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Northern District of Illinois 219 S.
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DURBIN, DUCKWORTH ANNOUNCE SCREENING COMMITTEE, APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) announced [yesterday](#) that they will begin accepting applications from those interested in serving as a Federal District Court Judge in the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division. The Senators will be assisted by a screening committee whose task is to review and vet District Court candidates and advise the Senators regarding the candidates' qualifications and fitness for the position.

“Our constitutional responsibility to advise and consent is one of the most important duties we have in the Senate. As we make recommendations for lifetime judicial appointments, we will benefit from the guidance and insights of our distinguished screening committee,” the Senators said. **“We thank the members of the screening committee for their willingness to serve and look forward to recommending qualified and experienced individuals to the White House.”**

The Senators' screening committee in the Northern District of Illinois will be chaired by the Honorable David Coar (ret.), former U.S. District Court Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. The other members of the Northern District Committee are Alejandro Caffarelli, Michael Chu, Kevin Conway, Herschella Conyers, Edward Feldman, Betty Jang, Monica Llorente, Laurie Mikva, Zalduaynaka (“Z”) Scott, and Carlina Tapia-Ruano.

Biographies of each member of the screening committee can be found below.

Application Process:

Applicants for the federal district court must submit a cover letter, resume, and a completed copy of this [questionnaire](#) to applications@durbin.senate.gov by **5 p.m. CT on Monday, September 11**. Applicants are requested to incorporate their cover letter, resume, completed questionnaire, and any attachments to the questionnaire into a single PDF document if possible. The application questionnaire is nearly identical to the one used by the Senate Judiciary Committee and will help provide insight into candidates' backgrounds and qualifications. The screening committee will review candidates and advise the Senators, who will make recommendations on potential nominees to the President. Once the President submits a nomination to the U.S. Senate, the nominee will be reviewed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, which Senator Durbin chairs, and will receive a vote in the Committee. If a nomination is approved by the Judiciary Committee, the nomination will be sent to the full Senate for consideration.

Screening Committee for the Northern District of Illinois:

The Honorable David H. Coar (Ret.) (committee chair): Judge Coar served as a United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois for sixteen years, from 1994 to 2010. He had previously served the Northern District for eight years as a United States Bankruptcy Judge and for three years as a United States Bankruptcy Trustee. Judge Coar taught for over a decade at DePaul University College of Law as an Associate Professor of Law and additionally served as Associate Dean. He has also worked in private practice and as an arbitrator. Judge Coar received his B.A. from Syracuse University, his J.D. from Loyola University Law School, and his L.L.M. from Harvard Law School. He is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps Reserves.

Alejandro Caffarelli: Mr. Caffarelli is a trial lawyer who in 2001 founded the Chicago-based employment law firm of Caffarelli & Associates Ltd., where he continues to practice employment law in addition to serving on the employment law panel of the American Arbitration Association's National Roster of Arbitrators. He is a former President and Board member of the National Employment Lawyers' Association's Illinois affiliate, as well as a former Executive Board member of the Hispanic Lawyers' Association of Illinois. In 2014, Mr. Caffarelli was appointed by Chief Judge Rubén Castillo to the Pro Bono Advisory Committee for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Since 2005, Mr. Caffarelli has also provided pro bono legal assistance to indigent workers through the ARISE-Chicago community organization, and currently serves on the ARISE Legal Advisory Board. Mr. Caffarelli received his B.A. from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and his J.D. from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Michael Chu: Mr. Chu is a partner at the Chicago office of McDermott Will & Emery and sits as the chair of the firm's Racial and Ethnic Diversity Subcommittee. He is also the local head of McDermott's Intellectual Property Litigation Practice Group. Mr. Chu is the immediate past board chair of Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Chicago (2013-2020) and is a former president of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (2004-2005). He received his B.S. from the University of Illinois in 1989 and his J.D. from the William and Mary Law School in 1992.

Kevin Conway: Mr. Conway is a partner at the law firm Cooney & Conway in Chicago. His practice focuses on mesothelioma, mass tort, wrongful death, and catastrophic injury cases. He is a fellow of the International Society of Barristers and the American College of Trial Lawyers and is a past president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association. He is also past chairman of the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund, past president of the Celtic Legal Society of Chicago, and a board member for Lawyers for the Creative Arts. He received his B.A. and J.D. from Loyola University in Chicago.

Herschella Conyers: Professor Conyers is the Lillian E. Kraemer Clinical Professor in Public Interest Law and the Director of the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Clinic (CJJC) at the University of Chicago Law School. CJJC represents indigent clients charged with crimes in both Juvenile and Criminal Courts throughout Cook County. Before joining the law school, she served as an assistant public defender, supervisor, and 6th District Deputy Chief in the Office of the Cook County Public Defender. Her work there included conflicts cases and capital litigation. Professor Conyers is also actively engaged in criminal and juvenile justice policy and reform and is currently the Chair of the Juvenile Justice Initiative. She is emerita faculty and former board member of the National Criminal Defense College and continues to lecture and speak around the country. Professor Conyers received her B.A. and J.D. from the University of Chicago.

Edward Feldman: Mr. Feldman is a partner at the Chicago law firm Miller Shakman Levine & Feldman LLP, where he has worked since 1988. His practice focuses on complex civil litigation, civil rights, and professional responsibility matters. He previously served as law clerk to U.S. District Judge Marvin E. Aspen and then worked for two years as a clinical fellow at the Northwestern University Legal Clinic. He has served as an adjunct law professor at Northwestern since 1988 teaching trial advocacy and ethics, and also has taught trial advocacy at the University of Chicago Law School. He is a past Chair of the Chicago Bar Association Professional Responsibility Committee and of the Board of Directors for the Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights. He received his B.A./B.S. from the University of Illinois and his J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Betty Y. Jang: Ms. Jang is the founder of BYJ Law LLC, a boutique law firm specializing in general counsel services to emerging growth companies. She previously served as chief legal officer and general counsel at several public and private companies, practiced at a national law firm, was an adjunct professor at the University of Illinois College of Law, and began her career as an assistant public defender with the Office of the Cook County Public Defender. Ms. Jang is a Member of the Board of Trustees for the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation. Ms. Jang volunteers for various non-profit organizations, is an alumna of the United State of Women's Galvanize Chicago Program, and has held numerous Board positions in local, state, and national bar associations. She received her B.A. from the University of Illinois and her J.D. from Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Monica L. Llorente: Ms. Llorente teaches Business Associations, Contract Drafting, and Public Interest Law courses at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. She has broad experience in both the private and public sectors. She is an active leader, trainer, and writer in contract drafting and the development of different types of business entities. In addition, she has served as an advocate for and with young people in national campaigns and has represented young people in need in various judicial and administrative proceedings. Ms. Llorente has served in different organizations, including the American Bar Association and the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois. Before Northwestern, she practiced corporate law at Baker & McKenzie in Chicago. She received her A.B. from Duke University and her J.D. from the Northwestern Pritzker School of Law.

Laurie Mikva: Ms. Mikva is a Commissioner on the Illinois Court of Claims, and she also serves on the Board of Directors for the Legal Services Corporation and on the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. Most recently, she was a clinical professor at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Ms. Mikva previously worked as an attorney at the Illinois Department of Employment Security and the Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, and also served as an assistant public defender in the Champaign County Public Defender's Office and the Office of the Maryland Public Defender, Appellate Division. She received her B.A. from Beloit College and her J.D. from New York University School of Law.

Zaldwaynaka ("Z") Scott: Ms. Scott is currently the President of Chicago State University, a position she assumed in 2018. From 1987 to 2003, she worked as a federal criminal prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois, serving in various management positions including Chief of the General Crimes Section. After her service at the U.S. Attorney's Office, she served as Executive Inspector General for the Office of Governor of Illinois (2003-05) and worked as a partner in the Chicago office of Foley & Lardner LLP. She also served for four years as Assistant Corporation Counsel in the Office of the Corporation Counsel for the City of Chicago (1983-87). She has taught as an adjunct instructor at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law, the University of Chicago Law School, and the UIC Law School (formerly John Marshall School of Law). She received her B.S. from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and her J.D. from the Indiana University Mauer School of Law-Bloomington.

Carlina Tapia-Ruano: Ms. Tapia-Ruano is the principal and founder of the Chicago office of Tapia-Ruano & Gunn PC. She has practiced in the field of immigration law for over forty years, focusing on family and waiver applications and representation before the Immigration Courts. She is a former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and former chair of the Chicago Bar Association Section on Immigration Law. Ms. Tapia-Ruano is a frequent speaker on immigration laws and is a past adjunct professor at IIT-Chicago Kent School of Law and at DePaul University College of Law. She received her B.A. from Illinois Wesleyan University and J.D. from DePaul University College of Law. She was born in Cuba and immigrated to the United States as a refugee.