

VID Candidate Survey: Civil Court Judge

Email address *

ChristopherChin_us@yahoo.com

Name: *

Christopher Chin

Civil Court Judge • Questions

Why do you want to be a judge? *

I want to be a judge to help litigants who feel they are "outside" the system and level the playing field so that everyone can feel that they are treated fairly, regardless of their personal background or socio-economic status. When I was a young associate at a law firm, I was in Small Claims Court one night and witnessed a judge presiding over a case with a self-represented litigant who was visibly nervous. Through patience and compassion, explaining the process and procedure and why certain evidence was not admissible, the judge was able to calm the litigant and made her feel that she received a fair hearing, even if she did not have a lawyer. I thought to myself, "it must be so awesome to be able to have the power to effect people in such a positive way". At the time, I never believed I could ever even aspire to be a judge. Over the years, I sought to gain as much experience as I could. I have experience practicing in many different courtrooms and taken cases to verdict in many jury trials in different counties. I have witnessed good judges and not so good judges and after 25 years of practice, I am ready to be a good judge.

What are some of the ways a civil court judge can advance progressive ideals in their rulings? *

I believe a Civil Court Judge should interpret the law in a way that takes into account the many ways that that the ruling could impact the parties and/or the lawyers and strive to do justice for all involved. A Judge should try to fashion the ruling to achieve the most overall good for those involved while following the law, as well take into account how that ruling may be used in the future.

What are some of the ways a civil court judge can create a courtroom that reflects progressive ideals? *

I believe one of the ways a Civil Court Judge can create a courtroom that reflects progressive ideals is to make sure that self-represented litigants understand the process and procedures so they know that they will get a fair hearing if they do not have a lawyer. Another way is to make sure that everyone is addressed by their preferred pronouns. Judges should also work to improve diversity in the bar and the bench.

What are some concrete ways you would make your courtroom more accessible for pro se plaintiffs and defendants? *

I would take into account the time of the self-represented litigants and accommodate their schedules as much as possible. For example, a hearing can be scheduled for 3:30 in the afternoon to accommodate someone that needs to pick up their children from school. If at all possible, hearings can be held virtually. People should be allowed to take short phone calls as long as it does not disrupt the court proceedings. The court can give people a time window to be inside the courtroom so they can attend to other things while waiting for their case to be called.

Each judge is able to create certain personal court rules governing procedure in their courtroom. What are some personal court rules that you plan to adopt, and why? *

I would limit the amount of paper generated by not requiring the parties to submit courtesy paper copies of submissions that are already filed electronically. Conferences should be done virtually if possible. Parties should not be punished if they fail to answer both calendar calls - if a party appears at the first calendar call, they should not be defaulted if they fail to appear for the second calendar call. I would encourage consent discovery Orders to be worked out among the parties and submitted electronically (like we are doing during the pandemic) so the parties do not need to appear in Court. I would not grant oral argument on all motions and will specify in my rules that a party can request oral argument and that a representation that the argument will be made by an attorney whose participation enhances diversity in the bar or that it will be by an attorney admitted to practice fewer than five years will weigh in favor of the Court granting oral argument.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

Growing up Chinese in Burma, I will never take for granted the freedoms we enjoy here in America. I have a deep understanding of how it feels to be treated like a second class citizen by the government and authority. As a result of this experience, I constantly check myself for implicit biases to make sure I treat everyone fairly. Additionally, I come from a proud union family. My mother was a civil servant who worked for the New York City Human Resources Administration and the Department of Homeless Services. She was among the first workers to join her union, and, after retirement, she went to work for the union as a volunteer. In 2013, the union honored her with their "Labor Hero of the Year" award. My mom instilled a strong work ethic in me and a sense of civic responsibility. I try to give back where I can. I have been a Small Claims arbitrator for many years. For years, I volunteered at the pro-bono clinic held by the Asian American Bar Association in Chinatown and at the NYC Bar Association's Monday Night Law clinic. I also volunteered at the help desk at the Housing Court in Brooklyn. I also volunteered to spend time with a blind elderly man with Parkinson's to go out to dinner with him because he did not have any family nearby. All of these in-person programs were put on pause due to the pandemic. During the pandemic, I volunteered with Councilmember Carlina Rivera's office and Good Old Lower East Side ("GOLES") to make wellness calls to residents and educate them about the eviction moratorium and where the nearest food banks were located. I also urged them to complete the US Census. On Election Day, I volunteered as a poll watcher and helped distribute free food donated by ReThink Food. I currently volunteer with The Fortune Society in their Mock Interview Program for formerly incarcerated individuals.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms