



Dear Candidate:

The San Francisco Democratic Party (SFDCCC) is eager to learn more about your candidacy and invites you to participate in our endorsement process.

If you would like to be considered for an endorsement by SFDCCC, please complete the attached Endorsement Questionnaire and return to [info@sfdemocrats.org](mailto:info@sfdemocrats.org) by **Monday, March 12 at 5:00pm**. Our Endorsement Committee will meet candidates for interviews on **March 17, 2018**. The exact time of your interview and location will be provided to you after we review your completed Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire and have determined that you meet our bottom line requirements to be considered for an endorsement. At the time of the interview, you may also provide additional information to supplement your questionnaire. You are limited to four (4) total pages, and you must provide 45 copies.

SFDCCC seeks to encourage the election of qualified local candidates who will help to advance our shared Democratic values. We are only able to endorse registered Democrats, except in the case of a nonpartisan race in which no registered Democrat has qualified for the ballot. We also seek to support those candidates who express agreement and have demonstrated support for our core issues and priorities, which are included in the California Democratic Party Platform, our Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures Manual (which can all be found at [www.cadems.org](http://www.cadems.org) and [www.sfdemocrats.org](http://www.sfdemocrats.org)).

To qualify for an endorsement interview, all candidates must indicate that they support the Democratic principles in our party platform, complete the Candidate Endorsement Questionnaire, and return it by the deadline of **March 12, 2018 at 5:00 pm**.

Candidate interviews will be brief and will be open to both SFDCCC members and members of San Francisco's chartered democratic clubs. Following the Endorsement Committee interview, the full body will deliberate and vote on a final endorsement at our meeting scheduled for March 28, 2018, at 6:30pm, at the Tenderloin Community

Elementary School. Meetings are open to the general public and are live streamed on our Facebook page. You are welcome to attend or follow our progress online.

The following rules also apply to the SFDCCC endorsement process and any violation may be subject to further actions, including a revocation of the endorsement:

1. Candidates may only use the “SF Democratic Party” name and image after the full membership endorsement;
2. Once endorsed, the SFDCCC will provide a high-resolution copy of our logo which may be used in your materials **only** for the race for which you were endorsed;
3. In the case of elections in which Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) is employed, listing of the SFDCCC endorsement must accurately reflect the ranked endorsement as detailed in our Policies and Procedures Manual;
4. Third parties wishing to utilize the SFDCCC name or logo in their campaign materials must submit a request to our Executive Director.

Thank you very much for your interest in the SFDCCC endorsement. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions. We look forward to learning more about your candidacy and your campaign.

Respectfully,  
The San Francisco Democratic Party

By signing below, you acknowledge that you will comply with the SFDCCC’s Bylaws and Policies and Procedures and you will not utilize the SFDCCC name, the San Francisco Democratic Party, or its logo without written permission.

Elizabeth Zareh \_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

\_Seat #9 SF Superior Court\_\_\_\_\_  
(position and seat number)

\_/S/ Elizabeth Zareh\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

March 13, 18\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)



**SFDCCC Candidate Questionnaire  
Superior Court Judge - June 2018**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Elizabeth Zareh \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_ One Embarcadero Center, #1020, SF CA 94111 \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ San Francisco, CA 94111 \_\_\_\_\_

Campaign Phone Number \_\_\_\_ (415) 830-3031 \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_ elizabeth@elizabethzareh.com \_\_\_\_\_

What office and which seat are you running for?  
\_\_ Seat# 9 SF Superior Court \_\_\_\_\_

Are you running for re-election?    Yes                      No    X

What other elected positions have you held previously?  
  
\_\_ None, But, I am appointed to serve as temporary judge at SF superior and as a Commissioner at SF Assessment Appeals Board.

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Please complete this questionnaire and bring 45 copies (for the 31 Committee members and for Democratic Clubs) with you to be distributed just prior to your interview appointment on **March 17, 2018**
- **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\* Please send electronic copies to [info@SFDemocrats.org](mailto:info@SFDemocrats.org) by 5:00 PM on**

**March 12, 2018**

· With the *possible exception* of a Democratic candidate filing to run after the questionnaire due date, *only* candidates who return a completed questionnaire electronically by the due date will be allowed to present before the committee.

· At the time of the interview, you may also provide 45 copies of up to 4 pages of supplemental information attached to your questionnaire for distribution to SFDFCC members (materials are not to be passed out during the meeting).

· We may distribute the questionnaires in preparation for event and post them on the SFDFCC website for the public to view.

· If you have not heard from the committee by **Thursday, March 15**, please contact Executive Director, Adam Mehis at 415-626-1161 or info@sfdemocrats.org to schedule a time slot during the Endorsement Interview Meeting.

**PART I: GENERAL QUESTIONS (200 words or less)**

- 1) Are you a registered member of the Democratic Party? Yes
- 2) Please describe your contributions to the Democratic Party and/or increasing civic engagement in the democratic process at the local, state and or/national level in recent years. I have voted for democrats every year. I have donated over \$2300 to the DCCC and Hillary campaign.
- 3) Are there any other civic causes or organizations that you are involved with currently or were involved in prior to taking the bench? Please describe. I am a member of the Queen's Bench and SF Women's Political Committee. As indicated above I work as a volunteer as a temporary judge at SF superior and work as a Commissioner at Assessment appeals board.
- 4) Please list any organizations or elected officials who have endorsed you. The endorsement process is still ongoing and waiting to hear back. I am working with Supervisor Asha Safaie for endorsement.

**PART II: SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS (250 Words or less)**

- 1) What do you perceive as the strengths of the Superior Court? What are the current weaknesses and how would you like to see the judicial system improved?

### San Francisco Court's E-filing System

San Francisco e-filing system is a disaster. Unless you are a big firm and have a e-filing specialist on staff you are hopeless to file anything in San Francisco. Self-represented litigants are forgotten. It is a maze. The court rejects documents on a regular basis without proper reasons or explanations. San Francisco clerks act as opposing attorneys rather than clerks. Documents are rejected on multiple times for different reasons. With each rejection there is a fee of \$13.50.

It is so difficult that large law firms like Morrison & Foerster are hiring e-filing specialist in San Francisco. San Francisco has one of the highest ratings in rejecting e-filings in the state. My opponent, judge Lee, implemented the e-filing system. After being on the bench for 20 years, this is what we have. We are in Silicon Valley and we need to change this defective system. If elected, I will make it my first priority to develop a simple, easy, and affordable e-filing system.

### Master Calendar

Our master calendar system is another major problem. It is time to move into this century. Federal courts, and other counties have single assignment system. Litigants and pro se litigants representing themselves, are homeless in San Francisco Court. We have no idea who to turn to when faced with an issue that can be resolved with a simple conference call. Because of that everyone is forced to file a motion. This makes litigation expensive.

In federal courts or other counties, cases are assigned to a single department. That in of itself reduces motion practice. Many issues can be handled without a motion by a conference call if it is assigned to a single department. This will ultimately it will reduce the litigation cost.

### A Judiciary that Reflects San Francisco Values

San Francisco never had an Iranian-American judge on the bench. 3% of San Francisco's population is Iranian-American. Iranian-American judges preside in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Addition of an Iranian-American judge to San Francisco represents San Francisco values. Our judiciary must reflect the ethnicity of its population.

### Seat #9

Elizabeth is running for Seat #9. Currently, Seat #9 is occupied by Judge Cynthia Ming-Mei Lee. In addition to Judge Lee, Kwixuan Maloof from public defender's office is running for the same seat. In this election alone, four SF public defenders are running. How many public defenders do we want as judges. Their experiences are limited to the cases handled by the public defender's office which is mostly criminal cases. They lack experience in civil, real estate, construction defect and other complex issues facing San Francisco court.

As noted by California Senator Scott Wiener that could be a problem. He said: "It concerns me that one public defender's office is trying to take out four judges in one fell swoop."

[https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Bay-Area-Dems-defend-4-GOP-appointed-judges-](https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Bay-Area-Dems-defend-4-GOP-appointed-judges)

12611704.php. None of them have any background in real estate or important civil issues facing San Francisco.

According to California State Bar, Judge Lee was admitted to practice law in 1974. She was appointed in 1998 by Governor Pete Wilson. The Robing Room, a website dedicated to rate judges, rated Judge Lee 3.3 out of 6. Attorneys appearing before Judge Lee characterized her as "mean," "arrogant," "bias," and wanting "to humiliate and embarrass any attorney who does not suck up to her, like a queen on the throne." It is time to change.

- 2) Please summarize your qualifications and experience for the office you are seeking. Have you ever had any experience with management? If you are seeking re-election, what is your experience prior to serving on the bench?

I was admitted to California State Bar in 1996. Since then, I have been representing individuals and corporations in civil matters in state, federal, and appellate courts including the 9th Circuit court of appeals. I have successfully argued before the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit and other appellate courts.

I have tried jury and non-jury trials. I have handled 100+ depositions, cross-examinations, and examinations where many of which were highly contested. I have argued and defended over 70 substantive and/or dispositive motions in court. I have extensive litigation background.

Since 2016, I have been serving as judge pro tem for San Francisco Superior court.

Since 2017, I have been serving as a commissioner for the City of San Francisco. I am one of the commissioners at the Assessment Appeals Board.

Every trial and every case have its own management issues. Working with staff, experts, and opposing attorney requires management skills. I have been doing this for the past 23 years.

- 3) Have you ever had to support a legal position that was contrary to your personal moral beliefs? Please describe. I can't think of one.
- 4) What do you perceive are the primary causes to the high rates of incarceration among communities of color? Do you believe the Court has a role to play in criminal justice reform? Judges should not blindly endorse the sentencing guideline reports given to them. That has been a problem. A role of a judge is to examine the records and ALL the evidence. A judge should not simply follow a recommendation given by reports. Judges are not paying attention and to get rid of their cases simply follow reports.
- 5) Do you believe that the current bail schedule has disproportionate impacts on low-income communities of color? How could this system be reformed and how?

Judges have leeway when imposing a bail. The amount of bail should not be an issue when someone cannot afford it. For example, daily reporting or mandatory attendance at certain classes to improve their lives can replace our jails and bail

system. The goal should be to help them to become better citizens in their communities. Education is the key not locking them up.

We can establish a pilot program to partner with our high-tech companies to provide free coding classes for low risk defendants. This mandatory bail replacement program can help them improve their lives without a cent to the state.

- 6) San Francisco is facing a car break-in epidemic that is organized by crime networks. What do you perceive are the factors leading to this problem? What is the court's role in preventing offenders returning to crime?

Keeping everyone behind bars is not the solution. Education is the key. Clearly the disparity between high and low income and inability to meet your daily needs drive individuals to become part of a crime network. Our court system can be the pioneer in establishing programs to replace carjackers to high-tech coders.

Every year we issue H1B visas to many countries to move people to here to help our high-tech companies. We can implement various programs at our schools, prisons and short-term classes to meet the exact need of our high-tech companies. We have the people, all we must do is to train them. We can train them as part of their sentencing, or bail process so they have another choice.

- 7) Do you believe there is enough diversity in the court system? If not, how are you working to improve representation?

Absolutely not. We only have Asian and African-American judges. San Francisco never had an Iranian-American judge on the bench. 3% of San Francisco's population is Iranian-American. Iranian-American judges preside in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Addition of an Iranian-American judge to San Francisco represents San Francisco values. Our judiciary must reflect the ethnicity of its population. If elected I will be the first Iranian-American and Muslim on the bench in SF.

- 8) How does your background and experience prepare you for legal cases pertaining to the rights of women, people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ?

I grew-up with these issues. I am a woman born in Iran in a Muslim family and faced discrimination all my life. I could not get a job as a lawyer because of my name. I started my own practice. Today, I am facing resistance not because I am not qualified because I am a woman from Iran.

My sister in-law (love her so much) is a lesbian. My cousin (near and dear to my heart) is gay. I understand their issues and pain. I have been around them all my life. They are part of my community.

When my mother got sick and was confined to her wheelchair, I felt the importance of having facilities and law that could easily support disability as well as regular people.

In my practice I represent Muslims and Muslim organizations.

- 9) Do you believe there should be implicit bias training for judges? Yes. But that is not enough. Having diversity in the court makes a significant difference. Unfortunately, many believe having Asians or African Americans on the bench will somehow eliminate bias. But, diversity includes much more than that. I believe as a Muslim and an Iranian-American, I am the path to help our judiciary face implicit bias.
- 10) What is the court's role in decriminalizing those with mental illness or the homeless who are caught up in our criminal justice system? Our judges need to understand that our jails are not the solution to mentally ill or homeless population. We need to do a better job of understanding our communities and its needs. Jails are not the solution for everyone that is coming before us as a defendant. We need to create strong partnership with various businesses, hospitals and other service companies to be engaged in this process. We need to work together as a community.
- 11) How should the court ensure a fair hearing in the case of pro per or unrepresented litigants in family court or housing court?

Our current system is a disaster. It is a maze. This can easily be simplified by partnering with our law schools and other non-profits that could directly work with them.

But, the main way of fixing this issue is by strengthening our e-filing system. We can develop an interactive website which will help pro-se and self-represented litigants to go through the system efficiently and economically.

- 12) What do you perceive are the biggest obstacles the court faces in civil litigation? How can this be improved to best serve the general public?

E-filing system, master calendar system and having knowledgeable judges on the bench.



#### Master Calendar:

In 1997, federal courts changed their master calendar system to single assignment system. They copied it from Australian court system. The system is the product of extensive, detailed planning by the Federal Court. This addressed, among many things, aspects such as case allocation and associated workload issues, development of a recommended case management model, compliance monitoring and sanctions, organisational and administrative changes including staffing and resources, transitional issues, and related procedural reforms. We need to this in San Francisco.

#### Knowledgeable Judges on the Bench

Civil is very different than Criminal law. The complexity of issue cannot be underestimated. Simply bring judges from criminal court or hiring judges from prosecutor's office or PD's office will not address what is facing San Francisco superior court. We have our own leaning tower and its issues. Our city is facing massive housing and construction crisis. We need judges that can understand these complex issues and tackle them in day one.