



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.

**Maria Evangelista**  
(name)

**Superior Court Judge, Seat 7**  
(position and seat number)

  
(signature)

**3/9/18**  
(date)



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

Name [Maria Evangelista](#)

Address [554 Rockdale Drive](#)

City, State, Zip [San Francisco, CA 94127](#)

Campaign Phone Number [415-259-9454](#)

Cell Phone Number [415-425-7312](#)

E-mail Address [evangelista4superiorctjudge@gmail.com](mailto:evangelista4superiorctjudge@gmail.com)

What office and which seat are you running for?

[San Francisco Superior Court Judge, Seat 7](#)

Are you running for re-election?    Yes                      No

What other elected positions have you held previously? [Director at Large on La Raza Lawyers Association, Board member La Raza Centro Legal](#)

**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 SFDCCC 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 SFDCCC 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](mailto: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've been a Democrat since I was 4 years old. My parents were immigrants from Jalisco, Mexico and the Democratic Party is the political party that has shown affection, compassion and empathy to their struggle.

Searching for a voice for my family's difficulties, I started running for office in the first grade and didn't stop until I became student body president in high school. I have always advocated for the advancement of women and minorities in education and in fields where we are underrepresented.

In high school I started volunteering at the local level on the Barbara Boxer Campaign because she was a woman and a Democrat. I learned how campaigns are run and how ideas are discussed and exchanged.

When I attended San Francisco State University, I majored in political science and worked on several ballot measures. I also volunteered to do exit polls on the measures that I had worked on. I learned how to read voting data and realized that members of my community did not have a significant voice in the polls. While interning at the District Attorney's Office, I also studied and researched laws and legislation that affected members of my community such as three strikes, elder abuse and domestic violence.

In my last semester of college, I applied for and received a full scholarship to become an Assembly Fellow in Sacramento. I was a fellow for Assembly Member Tony Cardenas from Van Nuys, CA. Because I really wanted to work with a Latino role model and San Francisco did not have any Latino representatives, I was directed to Tony's office. While I was there I wrote speeches, drafted legislation, and met with lobbyists. I met many other Latino representatives such as Cruz Bustamante and Antonio Villaraigosa. However, I always harbored the wish that someday there would be more Latina women in the State Legislature.

After graduating from College I wanted to understand how government and democracy

worked at the Federal Level so I went to Washington DC. While I was there, I worked at the law firm of Lasa Monroig and Veve as a Legislative assistant working with the Government of Puerto Rico. I also worked at Baker, Donelson, Bearman and Caldwell in Washington D.C. while I was in law school. There I learned how clients advocate for their interests on the national level.

After graduation, I spent a lot of time thinking about how I could best help my community back home in San Francisco. Growing up I saw a lot of homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction. I decided to move home and I've now been an advocate for women, families, and the mentally ill for the last 14 years as a deputy public defender. Every one of my 51 jury trials has been an exercise in democracy and an application of our nation's constitutional rights.

- 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.
1. I am Director at Large on the Board of the La Raza Lawyer's Association. I sit on the Scholarship Committee where we help students fund their summer internships at public interest clerkships.
  2. I am on the Board of La Raza Centro Legal, which helps immigrants, elderly and tenants with legal assistance.
  3. I participate in Vanderbilt Law School's Interview Program for incoming students. I support and encourage women and minorities to apply to this prestigious institution. I make recommendations to Vanderbilt Law School as to which applicants they should accept. I have advocated for more diversity at Vanderbilt Law School. I was one of the first Mexican American Women to graduate from VLS and I would still like to see more do so.
  4. I have guest taught at Hastings College of the Law through the Trial Advocacy Program.
  5. I have co-chaired the SF Public Defender's Toy Drive, done in conjunction with the San Francisco Bar Association, for approximately 7 years. We provide approximately 100 toys or clothing items annually to children of all backgrounds in need.

- 4) Please list any organizations or elected officials who have endorsed you.

Supervisor Hillary Ronen, Supervisor Jeff Sheehy, Public Defender Jeff Adachi, Chief Attorney of Public Defenders Office Matt Gonzalez, School Board Member Matt Haney, Honorable Perker Meeks (retired), Dean Preston, Leah Lacrox, Honey Mahogany, Kelly Groth, and Petra De Jesus.

## **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?

I believe Restorative and Collaborative Courts are strengths of the Superior Court.

One of the Superior Court's current weaknesses is a narrow perspective that comes with a

judiciary predominantly comprised of attorneys from the prosecutorial ranks that were appointed by politicians. As a public defender with 14 years of experience running for judicial office, I believe I will bring a much needed perspective to the judiciary.

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 have been a litigation and trial attorney at the San Francisco Public Defender's Office for the last 14 years. I have done 50 jury trials. In the last few years I have tried several complex life cases. I regularly participate in our office's training as a speaker/instructor.

3) Have you ever had to support a legal position that was contrary to your personal moral beliefs? Please describe.

As an officer of the court, I am obligated to uphold California's laws and constitution. As a public defender, I have defended many individuals who were charged with serious crimes. I represent people, not crimes. My moral obligation and the oath that I took requires that I presume every client is innocent and to fight for a just process.

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?

I believe the high rates of incarceration among communities of color are the result of a historic Class Justice model that our country is based on. When protection of property is the bedrock of many of our criminal laws, the poor are the focus of law enforcement's attention. The courts are in the best position to monitor these trends and apply innovative solutions to stop recidivism.

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?

Absolutely. Throughout my career as a public defender, many of my clients have had to assist in the preparation of their defenses while in jail because they were unable to make bail because they and/or their families simply could afford to do so. Statistically, a person has a much better chance of mounting a successful defense if that person is not incarcerated while the case is pending. The CA Court of Appeals recently found that the San Francisco Bail Schedule set by the current, sitting Superior Court Judges is unconstitutional. The system can be reformed by setting lower bails to meet the constitutional requirement proscribing excessive bail.

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?

I believe that most crime is the result of poverty, addiction, abuse, and/or mental illness. The court has a vital role to play in ending the cycle of recidivism that plagues a majority of those ensnared in the criminal justice system by addressing the root cause of crime through San Francisco's Restorative and Collaborative Courts including Young Adult Court, Behavioral Health Court, Veteran's Court, Drug Court, and Criminal Justice Court.

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

There is not enough diversity in the court system. By running for judge as a Mexican American woman, I will bring much needed diversity to our judiciary which will broaden its perspective to the benefit of all San Franciscans. Out of 52 superior court judges, there are only 5 Latino judges. If elected I would be the first Mexican American woman to be elected to the Superior Court of San Francisco.

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?

My parents came to this country from Mexico as farmworkers. They did not have a formal education and did not speak English. To avoid deportation they came to San Francisco and moved to 9th and Bryant which at the time was almost exclusively a leather community and LGBTQ. My first introduction to American culture was gay culture. I also went to school only a block away from the ARC. My entire community consisted of women, people of color, people with disabilities and LGBTQ. I also saw how, even in San Francisco, members of my community were discriminated against. Being sensitive to the differences of others because I myself am an "other" is the first step in eliminating implicit bias.

9) Do you believe there should be implicit bias training for judges?

Absolutely. I also believe that the training needs to be done by judges with personal experiences in implicit bias such as women and minorities.

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?

The court can play a role in decriminalizing the mentally ill and the homeless through diversionary programs that place such individuals in treatment facilities and residential programs instead of sending them to jails or prisons.

11) How should the court ensure a fair hearing in the case of pro per or unrepresented litigants in family court or housing court?

Judges should always inform unrepresented litigants of their right to seek counsel. A judge should stress the perils and even advise against litigating without counsel. I also think that the court resources center should provide a list of resources including the State Bar where people can seek counsel. In the case where a litigant is unrepresented, a judge has the obligation to guide the litigant through the legal process patiently and give them sufficient time to respond to the court's inquiry.

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?

The huge backlog of cases is the biggest obstacle the court faces in civil litigation. I believe this can be improved through more widespread use and acceptance of alternative dispute resolution including community courts and mediation.