



**Candidate Questionnaire for  
San Francisco Superior Court Judge, seat 7  
Primary Election, June 7, 2016**

Please return this questionnaire electronically to [contact\\_us@phdemclub.org](mailto:contact_us@phdemclub.org) **no later than Tuesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>**. Candidates who do not return the questionnaire by the due date will not be invited to participate in the April 5th forum. The completed questionnaires will be made available to our members online.

Candidate name:

*Victor M. Hwang*

Contact person:

*Victor M. Hwang, (415) 595-6081*

Email address:

*hwang@justice.com*

Phone number:

*(415)595-6081*

Web site:

*www.hwangforjudge.com*

Current occupation:

*I am currently the Deputy Director of Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach, a 40-year-old nonprofit which serves immigrants, seniors, tenants, and survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault.*

Please write a brief response ( $\leq 200$  words) to each question.

### 1. Why do you want to be a Superior Court Judge?

I went to law school to serve the community and after 23 years as a civil rights attorney, I want to be a judge so that I can continue to make the courts more accessible to everyone, not just those with the resources to pay for the top attorneys.

Having spent nearly every week of my career in the courts fighting for those who have been traditionally shut out of the system, I continue to see gaps in service for those who don't speak English, for those who can't afford an attorney, for immigrants and survivors of trauma.

National studies have shown over and over again that these underserved groups not surprisingly lose their cases at a higher proportion than those who have counsel simply because they don't know the rules of the game and are afraid to state their case.

I want to be a judge who promotes procedural justice first and foremost - who will do his best to remove obstacles to being heard fairly, who will make a decision on the merits of what is presented, and who will take the time to explain the decision so that both sides can walk away knowing that they've been heard.

### 2. How does your particular experience qualify you for this office?

I started as a public defender in East Los Angeles where I tried more than 50 cases ranging including three-strikes cases and the case of a 16-year-old boy tried as an adult for murder.

I joined the Asian Law Caucus in 1996 to co-lead national class action litigation against the "welfare reform" law, filed a federal lawsuit against the Housing Authority for its failure to address hate crimes, and sued the Rohnert Park police over the killing of a Chinese American based upon a martial arts stereotype.

Next I worked for 6 years with API Legal Outreach where I represented hundreds of immigrant women and children in domestic violence and human trafficking cases. I won a First Amendment suit on behalf of a San Quentin prisoner and wrote the brief on behalf of the Asian American community in support of marriage equality.

Then I worked for 6 years as a civil rights prosecutor specializing in hate crimes, human trafficking and sexual assault. Currently, I serve as deputy director of APILO, where I've grown the organization by developing a housing rights unit and unaccompanied minor practice and hired 12 attorneys (including 2 Latinas) to expand our services to the Latino community.

### 3. What distinguishes you from other candidates?

First, I am the only attorney to have practiced extensively in both civil and criminal courts. In San Francisco, judges are rotated between civil courts (which hear lawsuits, divorces, and

landlord/tenant cases) and criminal courts which deal with violations of law. I have practiced civil law for 12 years and criminal law for 11 years and understand both areas, as well as the intersections between civil and criminal law.

Second, I am the only attorney to have substantial trial experience. I have tried more than 80 criminal cases in my career including serious felonies such as sexual assault, attempted murder, and murder. Neither of my opponents has ever tried a serious felony case and we need judges who have the trial experience to preside over cases where defendants face lengthy prison terms.

Finally, I am the only attorney to have tried criminal cases as both a public defender and as a district attorney. We want judges who can be fair and impartial and not take the bench leaning towards one side or the other. Having served on both sides of the aisle, I will rely upon my experiences to bring a level of fairness and balance to the bench.

4. What endorsements have you received?

PROGRESSIVE ELECTED OFFICIALS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

Supervisors: John Avalos, David Campos, Jane Kim, Eric Mar, Aaron Peskin, Norman Yee.

Board of Education: Matt Haney, Sandy Lee Fewer

Organizations: District 8 Progressive Democrats, Richmond District Democratic Club, New Avenues Democratic Club, Community Tenants Association, UNITE HERE: Local 2, Teachers for Social Justice, Asian American Bar Association, South Asian Bar Association

COMMUNITY LEADERS (titles for identification only)

Dale Minami (founder, Asian Law Caucus)

Myrna Melgar (Executive Director, Jamestown Community Center)

Gail Gilman (Executive Director, Community Housing Partnership)

Steve Bingham (former Legal Aid attorney)

Malcolm Yeung (Deputy Director, Chinatown Community Development Center)

Jeremiah Jeffries (public school teacher)

Wendy Aragon

Dr. Joe Marshall and Sonia Melara (Police Commissioners)

Hene Kelly

Mia Satya, (Transitional Age Youth SF + Transgender Activist)

Patty Wada (Executive Director, Japanese American Citizens League)

Steve Nakajo (Executive Director, Kimochi senior citizen services)

Jessica Chia (eviction defense attorney)

In addition, I have been endorsed by nine judges, District Attorney George Gascón, Assemblymembers Phil Ting and David Chiu, State Treasurer John Chiang, Board of Equalization Member Fiona Ma and the Mayor.

For a full list of endorsers, please visit [www.hwangforjustice.com](http://www.hwangforjustice.com).

Thank you for your time and your commitment to public service. Pending timely receipt of your questionnaire, we look forward to seeing you at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House on April 5<sup>th</sup>.

*Executive Committee, Potrero Hill Democratic Club*