



**AMBA**  
AMERICAN MUSLIM  
BAR ASSOCIATION

Guidelines for Judicial Candidates  
Seeking Endorsement from AMBA

*Last Revised April 2021*

## **Introduction**

This guideline is designed with three goals in mind. First, to provide information for candidates who aim to receive endorsement from the American Muslim Bar Association (AMBA). Second, to provide transparency to the candidates and the public into the processes and guidelines that the AMBA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary (SCFJ) follows. Third, to provide objective criteria to the SCFJ when reviewing the requests of various candidates to guarantee a non-biased process ensues.

Any questions regarding the information contained in this document can be directed to Salmah Y. Rizvi, [president@ambalegal.org](mailto:president@ambalegal.org), 301-785-1653.

The AMBA SCFJ will oversee the examination of each candidate seeking endorsement by AMBA. This examination will include a review of the candidate's application documents, interviews with the candidate, and interviews with any other persons SCFJ deems fit to holistically examine the candidate, such as the candidate's references. Upon the completion of the examination, the SCFJ will make the final decision of endorsement, with the power vested in it by AMBA's general body. An endorsement will then be written and sent to support the candidate's nomination to her jurisdictional Congresswoman or Senator. AMBA will also send the endorsement to the Office of the U.S. President.

## **Goals**

The primary goal of AMBA in endorsing candidates for judicial positions is to promote the nomination of qualified and non-biased candidates, who share the mission and values of AMBA, and help them receive, state, administrative, and federal judgeships. AMBA endorses candidates who have shown a commitment to key AMBA values including, but not limited to, fairness and equality in the courts, equal access to justice, protecting the rights of all individuals under the rule of law, and demonstrating a specific interest in and commitment to the needs and concerns of the American Muslim community.

## **Criteria for Judicial Applicants**

### AMBA Membership

AMBA Membership is not required for endorsement. However, AMBA SCFJ reserves the right to consider membership as a factor when deciding to endorse candidates.

### Qualifications

When evaluating the qualifications of a candidate, AMBA SCFJ will consider the following factors along with any other factors the committee deems appropriate:

- Areas of practice;
- Commitment to the advancement of Muslims in the legal profession (e.g. as a mentor, advocate, or speaker/panelist at Muslim-focused events, etc.);
- Commitment to equal justice under law;
- Communication skills (oral and written);
- Demonstrated commitment to the Muslim community;
- Demonstrated commitment to the needs of underprivileged communities;
- Demonstrated freedom from bias;
- Integrity;
- Judicial temperament;
- Prior adjudicative experience;
- Professional experience; and
- Scholarship.

The above list does not indicate priority.

### Satisfaction of Statutory Requirements:

The AMBA SCFJ will only endorse candidates who have demonstrated that they satisfy the statutory requirements for the positions they seek.

## **Initiating the Process**

Before AMBA SCFJ will start the examination process, the candidate must provide the SCFJ with notice of their intent to seek endorsement from AMBA by emailing the Chair of the Standing Committee at [SCFJ@ambalegal.org](mailto:SCFJ@ambalegal.org). Persons seeking endorsement for another must provide confirmation from the candidate that they desire the endorsement and must ensure the compliance on behalf of the candidate with the instructions set forth below. The candidate then has a total of fourteen (14) days from the date of notice to complete the application process. The candidate should provide AMBA with at least thirty (30) days to complete the examination process.

Candidates need not be Muslim to apply for an endorsement. We encourage all highly qualified candidates to apply for an AMBA endorsement. The SCFJ will make value-based, not identity-based, judgments when evaluating each candidate.

## **Application Process**

Once notice has been given to the Chair of the SCFJ, the following information and materials must be sent to the SCFJ within the fourteen (14) day period mentioned above. A completed AMBA Candidate Application Form requires submission of the following:

1. The candidate's full name, including any previous names used;
2. The name of the position that the candidate seeks endorsement for, a brief description of the position, and a hyperlink or guidance to the relevant statutory requirements for candidacy for the position sought;
3. A resume or CV which must include the following:
  - a. Whether the candidate has for five (5) years immediately preceding, engaged in the active practice of law in any U.S. jurisdiction, or on the faculty of a law school in the U.S., or employed as a lawyer by the U.S. Government (or government of any jurisdiction of the U.S.), or any combination of the foregoing. State the type of employment for such five-year period;
  - b. List all jurisdictions in which the applicant has been admitted to practice law, the date of such admission, and the current status of each license(s);
  - c. List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievements;
  - d. List the titles, publishers, and dates of books, articles, reports, or other published materials the applicant has written.
4. Description of the general character of the candidate's practice.
  - a. Divide into periods with dates and state whether its character has changed over the years;
  - b. Describe your typical clients and mention the areas, if any, in which you have specialized;
  - c. For applicants applying to be assigned to a specialized Court (i.e., U.S. Court of Federal Claims, Immigration Court, Veterans Claims, etc.), describe and divide into periods with dates, the candidate's training, or experience in the practice of specialty law.
5. Describe not more than ten of the most significant litigated matters, which you handled and give the citations if the cases were reported.
  - a. Please give a capsule summary of the substance of each case and a succinct statement of what you believe to be the particular significance of the case.
  - b. Please identify the party or parties whom you represented, describe in detail the nature of your participation in the litigation and the final disposition of the case: (a) the dates of the trial period or periods; (b) the name of the court and the name of the judge before whom the case was tried; and (c) the names and addresses of counsel for the other parties.

6. List the contact information of no more than three references, as well as an executed release notice. AMBA SCFJ reserves the right to contact none or all the references prior to any recommendation/decision.
7. Provide answers to the following ethical questions:
  - a. Have you, to your knowledge, ever been under federal, state, or local investigation for possible violation of a criminal statute?
  - b. Have you ever been sued by a client?
  - c. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by any court, administrative agency, bar association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group?
  - d. If the answer is “yes” to any of the questions in 7 (a-c), provide particulars.
8. A draft letter of endorsement that highlights the qualifications of the candidate for the position sought. AMBA SCFJ reserves the right to alter the draft.

AMBA SCFJ reserves the right to request additional information that it deems relevant and useful in the examination of the candidate’s qualification for endorsement. The above application materials should be sent in *electronic format*, to [SCFJ@ambalegal.org](mailto:SCFJ@ambalegal.org)

## **Transparency of the Process**

The AMBA SCFJ volunteers countless *pro bono* hours to this process:

1. Each committee member will read the candidate’s application documents and one person (on rotation) will conduct a deeper due diligence dive of the candidate.
2. The committee maintains a list of prepared questions which helps identify candidates who have demonstrated fairness and equality in the courts, equal access to justice, protecting the rights of all individuals under the rule of law, and a commitment to the American Muslim community.
3. The committee will interview a candidate for 30-minutes. A second interview may be requested. A valid interview requires a quorum of committee members to be present and actively engaged during the interview.
4. The committee debriefs, using prepared evaluation criteria, to judge whether the candidate receives an endorsement. An endorsement will be granted only if a majority of the quorum votes to grant the endorsement.
5. Aside from the SCFJ Chair, individual committee members will remain externally anonymous to preserve the integrity of the process.

## **Concluding the Process**

The committee Chair who received notice of the intent to receive endorsement will inform the candidate at or before the thirty (30) day deadline regarding AMBA’s decision.

All documents assembled and received by AMBA in the examination process of the candidate will remain confidential. The information will not be disclosed except to members of the AMBA Board or SCFJ, unless such disclosure is warranted during the preparation of the final endorsement letter.