



**WEST LA DEMOCRATIC CLUB
APPLICATION FOR CONSIDERATION OF ENDORSEMENT
AND CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

DONNA TRYFMAN

Election Information

Election Date: **June 2, 2026**

Complete Name of Office Sought & District/Seat Number: **Judge, Los Angeles County Superior Court, Seat 131**

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that I am a registered Democrat and that the statements in this document and those in any attachments are true and correct. If any part of this application or any information provided during the endorsement process is found to be false, it may be cause for an immediate revocation of any endorsement. I understand that my application is available to any WLADC member upon request.

	Donna Tryfman	04/22/2026
Signature of Candidate	Print Full Name	Date

West LA Democratic Club understands that, as a judge, you have to remain impartial and follow the law, regardless of your particular beliefs. Some of the questions we ask you pertain to your personal beliefs and not how you would rule as a judge who is beholden to applying the law. It is understood by everyone in this committee that sometimes your personal beliefs and the law do not coincide and your answers in this committee do not commit you if you should happen to rule otherwise in a case.

Please provide written answers to the questions below:

1. **Why are you running for this office?** I am running for judge because I have had a unique perspective witnessing how the system affects everyday people and their families. I am the only one in the courtroom who interacts with the judge, the defendant, the prosecutor, the victims, the victims' family, the defendants' family, and law enforcement. I have spent over 30 years as an advocate for constitutional principles as a public defender and I'm seeking election to give those principles meaning as a neutral arbiter.
2. **What is your preliminary rating from the LA County Bar Association?** Qualified
3. **Briefly describe your educational and employment background.** I graduated with a BA in English and American Literature and a minor in Legal Studies from Brandeis University in 1989. I graduated with a JD in 1994 from the University of La Verne School of Law. I received the American Jurisprudence Awards in Contracts and Civil Procedure during my law school tenure. I was also part of Moot Court Honors.

My employment from 1995-1998 was an Attorney Associate at the Law Office of Mark J. Werksman, now known as Werksman, Jackson, Hathaway & Quinn. From 1998 to the present I have been employed by the Los Angeles County Office of the Public Defender. I currently hold the title of Deputy Public Defender IV and I am one of ten attorneys assigned to the Major Cases Unit handling special circumstance homicides. I was the Deputy in Charge at the Eastlake Juvenile Court from 2016-2019.

4. **Have you previously run for or held any elective or appointive public offices? If so, which and when? Have you run for a judicial seat before? If so, please state when, the result, and any ratings you received from any bar associations.** I ran for BHUSD School Board in 2020. I was unsuccessful. I have never run for a judicial seat. I was appointed by the City of BH to the Rent Stabilization Commission as Commissioner and served as Chair from 2023-2024. I was appointed to the BHUSD Facilities and Construction Committee and served as Chair in 2022. I was appointed by the BHUSD superintendent to the Behavioral Committee in 2024. I was appointed to serve as a Judge Pro Tempore in 2018 by the Los Angeles Superior Court. I was appointed to serve as a Mediator on the Mediation Volunteer Panel by the Los Angeles Superior Court in 2025.
5. **Are you a bench officer? If yes, please identify the position you currently hold.** I am not a bench officer but have sat approximately 40 times as a Judge Pro Tempore.
6. **Have you ever been disciplined for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct including sanctions required to be reported to the California State Bar by any court, administrative agency, bar association, disciplinary committee, or another professional group? If so, please give particulars.** No.
7. **List the five most significant cases in which you have been involved during your legal career and the nature of your involvement. Alternatively, if your practice does not involve litigation, describe the five most significant matters in which you have been involved during your legal career and the nature of your involvement. If currently a judge, list the five most significant matters with which you were involved prior to your appointment.**

I have been involved in many significant cases during my career and am currently chief counsel in significant special circumstance matters. The below represents five of the over one hundred jury trials I've completed. I consider these significant adult felony matters. I have handled significant juvenile transfer cases as well.

1. People v. Anthony Jones (Venice canals incident)-I was Chief Counsel of the capital litigation team on this special circumstance matter.
 2. People v. Domingo Rodas -special circumstance murder retrial after reversal of verdict. Chief Counsel
 3. People v. Mervin Perkins (rape trial). Chief Counsel.
 4. People v. Johnny Flores (murder trial). Chief counsel.
 5. People v. Joel Barron (kidnapping for rape trial) Verdict reversed. Chief Counsel
8. **If elected, people from disparate educational and socio-economic backgrounds are likely to appear before your court.**

- a. **How important is it to you that any of these members of the public have a basic understanding of the proceedings in your court?** The legitimacy and trust in the court system depends not only on fairness, but in the public's ability to see it in action. It is of utmost importance to me that everyone feels heard and seen in my courtroom. In my day to day practice, I make every effort to meet people where they are. That requires a patient understanding and sensitivity to disparate backgrounds and a sensitivity to individual circumstances. I would ensure adequate interpreters are provided, that I explain everything clearly and simply, and that I am patient. I would also employ use of correct gendering when appropriate.
- b. **Practically speaking, why do you think this is or is not important?** Most people who are from underserved communities sometimes have a patent and realized fear of the court system for various reasons. It is of absolute importance for everyone to have equal access to justice for a judicial officer to set the tone in the courtroom. This includes utilizing simple language, slowing down proceedings when necessary for complete understanding, and explaining decisions in a concise, transparent manner.
- c. **What steps would you take to make sure that lay-people who appear before your court fully understand the proceedings?** As stated above, the importance of people understanding court procedures and decisions cannot be overstated. Interpreters, correct pronouns, patience, and simple language all encourage transparency and accountability. Even when a litigant loses, they will leave feeling heard and visible.
- d. **Do you believe the answers to these previous questions vary at all depending on if you're dealing with criminal defendants versus civil litigants versus jurors and other non-party members of the public?** A judicial officer's conduct on the bench must not differ based on the type of hearing one is handling. Most importantly, a judicial officer must exhibit consistency. Consistency in temperament and consistency in rulings.

9. **Please list your top five (5) individual and organizational endorsements.** The Metropolitan News Organization, WS Carpenters Union, Citizens for Accountable Leadership, Ricardo D. Garcia, Steve Cooley, Dem clubs.

10. **How long have you been a registered Democrat? Have you been registered as a member of another political party? If so, which party and why?** I have been registered as a democrat continuously since 1992.

11. **Please list any organizations you are a member of, including the length of your membership and any leadership positions you have held in each organization.**

1. Inns of Court, member 2022-present
2. Public Defenders Association, president 2015-2021
3. WLALA, member 2022-present
4. LACBA: Criminal Justice Section Executive Board, 2024-present, Vice Chair of the Delegation to the Conference of California Bar Associations

12. **Please feel free to include any other information you would like us to know about you.**

When deciding whether or not to endorse in my race, WLA Dems should know that I have honor. I have lived through hardships (as have many). My lived experience as a single mother, widow,

and daughter of immigrants informs the type of judge I will be: compassionate, practical, and understanding that navigating difficult systems requires resilience and integrity. I believe in consistency and second chances where appropriate. I believe strongly the system must invest in the youth with structure and wrap around services to ensure they are contributing members of society.

Throughout my career as a public defender, I have handled a high-volume caseload while maintaining a commitment to thorough preparation, professionalism, and respect for all participants in the legal process. That experience has required me to make difficult decisions under pressure, communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds, and uphold the highest ethical standards.

I have also sought opportunities to contribute beyond my caseload, including mentoring newer attorneys and working collaboratively with colleagues, court staff, and opposing counsel to ensure the efficient and fair administration of justice.

If entrusted with this role, I would bring diligence, patience, and an even temperament to the bench. I understand the responsibility that comes with judicial service and would strive every day to ensure that all who appear before the court are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.

I love music concerts and live theatre.

I am also running a campaign of honor and integrity as I take the judicial canons of ethics seriously.

Candidate's Signature ____**D. Tryfman /s/**_____