

MARGARITA LÓPEZ TORRES

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VIA REGULAR MAIL
VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED
VIA FEDERAL EXPRESS
VIA FACSIMILE

Hon. Clarence Norman, Jr.
Chairman, Kings County Democratic County Committee
16 Court Street
Brooklyn, New York 11241

Dear Mr. Norman:

As I did last year, I am writing to advise you that I am seeking the Democratic Party's nomination to the Supreme Court for Kings County. I understand that a pre-requisite to this process is review by the judicial screening committee.

Although I would hope that the Judicial Screening Committee would find me qualified for the Supreme Court, I am constrained to note that last year when I wrote to committee chair Jerome Karp to request the committee's consideration, Mr. Karp immediately replied in writing that there "was no need to declare my candidacy to ... the Committee" because "candidates are only considered ... upon referral of the County leader." Because my name was not referred by you last year, the Judicial Screening Committee apparently took the position that it could not review my qualifications.

I would like to briefly review those qualifications here. As you know, I was elected to the Civil Court in November, 1992. With my re-election this past year, I am now the third most senior judge among the 32 Civil Court judges in Brooklyn. I have presided in Civil Court, Criminal Court, and Family Court, as well as the Red Hook Community Justice Center; few judges in the City have this breadth of experience. In all these diverse assignments, I have demonstrated hard work, fairness, good temperament, the ability and willingness to listen, and scholarship.

My legal background is similarly diverse. I was for many years a Legal Services staff (and managing) attorney representing indigent and low income persons; I handled and supervised family, housing, immigration, and public benefits cases, and represented victims of domestic violence. I was an Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City, where I brought civil and criminal proceedings for violations of building, health, and fire codes that protect the health and safety of our residents. I was the Deputy General Counsel of Children and Family Services for the Human Resources Administration, where I headed the City-wide legal department which represented the Child Welfare Administration and supervised a legal staff of several hundred. I also was an adjunct professor in the Women's Rights Litigation Clinic at Rutgers University School of Law

In my recent re-election campaign, I was found qualified by the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, the Brooklyn Bar Association, the Lesbian and Gay Law Association of Greater New York (LeGaL), and the Puerto Rican Bar Association.

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As you may know, in the most recent general election I was the top vote getter among the Kings County Democratic Party's eight judicial candidates in county-wide contests, and the only judicial candidate to receive over 200,000 votes in Brooklyn. Given the voting public's apparent receptiveness towards my candidacy, I would hope that the Democratic Party leadership would want someone with my experience and qualifications on the Party's slate for the Supreme Court this year.

In light of the above, please advise me whether you will permit the Judicial Screening Committee to consider my qualifications this year. I would ask as well that you provide me with the criteria you employ in determining which candidates are referred to the screening committee.* If you do not intend to allow the screening committee to consider my qualifications, I would appreciate being informed of this decision at once, as well as whether there is an appeal process.

I would also ask that you provide me with the rules, procedures, and criteria of the Judicial Screening Committee. I have repeatedly requested the outcome of the screening committee's deliberations concerning my applications in prior years, but was told by Mr. Karp that the results are "confidential" and are only revealed to the County leader. I have received no response to my prior written requests of you for the results of the committee's deliberations concerning my candidacy. If the committee concludes that I am not qualified to serve on the Supreme Court, despite my extensive judicial experience, I would think it fair and reasonable that I be appraised as to the basis of such conclusion, and whether there is an appeal process.

Despite our past differences, I would hope that judicial experience and independence can be the guiding principle in the selection process. I look forward to your prompt response.

Very truly yours,

/s/

Margarita López Torres

cc: Jerome Karp, Kings County Judicial Screening Committee
Kings County District Leaders

* I have gathered from various news media accounts that you seem to believe I committed an act of great disloyalty to the Democratic Party by allowing my name to be put into nomination in the Democratic Party judicial convention in 1997, as part of a slate of judicial candidates. Yet, quixotically, another member of that same 1997 slate (with no judicial experience) was nonetheless selected as a Democratic Party nominee for Supreme Court this past year, and was also the County's candidate for Civil Court in 2001.