



The Municipal League of King County  
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## 2008 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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The Municipal League of King County requests every candidate who participates in the candidate evaluation process to **submit background information prior to his/her interview with a candidate evaluation committee**. The questionnaire is the basis of the League's research and interview process. The League's ratings are non-partisan; they are based on standards of Involvement, Effectiveness, Character, and Knowledge, all of which have been developed and refined over the past 90 years.

A printed version of the questionnaire is available for candidates who prefer to use the traditional format. To obtain a hard copy, please contact the League office. A copy of this questionnaire will be provided to Candidate Evaluation Committee members to help them prepare for your interview. Candidate responses, except the confidential section, will be available to the general public at the League website.

The Municipal League requests the following materials from candidates. Please check to make certain you have sent in your:

- Candidate Questionnaire**  
Sent by:  Email  US Mail  Fax  Not Sending
- Resume (education, employment, and professional activities)**  
Sent by:  Email  US Mail  Fax  Not Sending  
 Check here if you DO NOT want your resume posted on the Municipal League website
- Campaign Materials**  
Sent by:  Email  US Mail  Fax  Not Sending
- Constituent Newsletters and other publications**  
Sent by:  Email  US Mail  Fax  Not Sending
- Photograph**  
Sent by:  Email  US Mail  Fax  Not Sending

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**Note: Electronically submitted questionnaires are strongly preferred. All materials can be emailed to [cec@munileague.org](mailto:cec@munileague.org). They can be processed and made available on-line far more rapidly than handwritten or typed submissions.**

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For non-electronic submissions, please print clearly and legibly and return the application **as soon as possible in order to allow the committee the greatest amount of time to prepare a complete report on your skills and experience.**

**We request that you return the Candidate Questionnaire  
by June 1, 2008**

If you have not yet been contacted to schedule an interview, or if you have questions about the candidate evaluation program, please contact the League office at 206-264-1070.

If you have a disability and require accommodation to participate in the candidate evaluation process, please contact the CEC Coordinator at the League office.

## 2008 Candidate Questionnaire

### SECTION I

#### BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Susan	H.	Amini

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

**Superior Court Judge, King County, Position #1**

3. Are you the incumbent?       Yes       No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

**8 Years**

5. How long have you resided in King County?

**18 years**

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan?       Partisan       Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party:

#### CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name:      **Friends of Susan Amini for Judge**

Address:      **11130 NE 33<sup>rd</sup> Place, Suite 120**

City/State/Zip:      **Bellevue, WA 98004**

Campaign Phone:      **(425) 454-3700**

Campaign Fax:      **(425) 455-9860**

Campaign E-mail:      **Cyrus.Habib@susanaminiforjudge.com**

Campaign Website:      **www.susanaminiforjudge.com**

#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)
City of Bellevue, Probation Advisory Board	Appointed	February 2008 to present	N/A
City of Bellevue, Human Services Commission	Appointed	1997-2000	N/A

2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run
N/A	

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## SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
- **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
- **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
- **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?

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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

I am running for King County Superior Court judge, first and foremost, because I feel that it is the best way for me to continue making a positive contribution to our community. I have over 17 years of diverse legal experience representing individuals from all walks of life. I have tried more than 80 jury trials in criminal cases and scores of family law cases, the latter being particularly rare for judicial candidates. I have used my legal knowledge and experience to find solutions to my clients' legal issues, and, in doing so, have come to a profound understanding of the ways in which our courts could better serve our community. Promoting access to justice and giving a voice to all parties coming before the court has always been at the heart of my professional life. I know that, sitting as a Superior Court judge, I would have a unique opportunity to make my courtroom as accessible and fair as possible.

I come to this race with judicial experience, having sat as a pro-tem judge in King County courts as needed since 1994. I have had the experience of hearing testimony, making decisions based on the evidence, holding offenders accountable, and imposing incarceration terms when appropriate. These experiences have given me an in-depth understanding of the great responsibility a judge faces each day. With confidence and humility, I can say that I am prepared for this responsibility.

I bring other professional experiences to the court, which are both diverse and timely. My Immigration law practice--both administrative and litigation--gives me a unique understanding of, and insight into, a growing number of cases that come before the court. Recent statistics show that one out of six people living in the greater Seattle area was born outside of the United States. These people bring their cases, from contract disputes to custody battles and criminal charges, to the King County courts, and their immigration status is often an important factor in the dispute at hand.

I believe that my diverse professional background would be particularly useful on the bench given the recently announced cuts to drug court services, family-court services and mental-health court services. More than ever, judges will be called upon to exercise their judgment on these issues within a trial context, without the full benefit of institutional support, training or resources. I believe that my work has afforded me a heightened sensitivity to these issues and a fluency in their intricacies.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

I believe that a sense of justice and fairness are the most important personal characteristics for a judge. These values come from my own life experiences. I had the formative experience of advocating on behalf of my son, Cyrus, as he went through his public school education. Cyrus lost his vision due to retinoblastoma in 1989 at age eight. He was enrolled in the Bellevue Public School system, and attended Somerset Elementary School, Stevenson Elementary School, and Bellevue International School.

I was his advocate with respect to issues of accessibility throughout his schooling. Whether the issue was his participation in the school's Model United Nations team, or ensuring that the National French Exam was accessible to him, I had to be an advocate and a voice for him so that he could be given an equal opportunity to participate. I worked and advocated for a level playing field for him and other similarly challenged students.

Throughout my career, access to justice has been the most important issue for me. I believe that our legal process has to be fair and impartial, but we also have to expand our view of access to justice. Providing accessibility to our courts for people with physical disabilities is a must, but there are silent barriers to our courts that also have to be addressed, such as language barriers and insufficient literacy.

I am also a patient person and a good listener. I believe these traits are equally important for a judge. People who come to our courts have a right to be heard and listened to. I believe a judge has to be a good listener and remain patient in the face of often grueling court calendars.

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

The most important contribution, and the one closest to my heart, is my advocacy on behalf of my son, Cyrus Habib (mentioned above). Today, Cyrus is 26 years old and has finished his second year of law school.

I am also proud of my work on the hundreds of cases that I have handled throughout the years. Although all my cases have been important to me, certain cases, due to their nature, stand out in my mind. I have included a short summary of a few of these. (NOTE: In order to keep the privacy of my clients, I have only used their initials and part of their case numbers):

G. v. G., King County Superior Court Cause # \*\*-\*47-1 SEA. My client was a woman from India who had married her husband through an arranged marriage, according to their custom. She had come to the United States to join her husband, who was working at a high tech company. Soon after her arrival, her husband changed his mind and pushed for her to return to India. She was left with no funds or resources at a friend's home. This was a referral from Chaya (a local non-profit organization helping women of South East Asia who are victim's domestic violence). The desperate situation of this woman, who was both educated and motivated, was heart breaking. Due to her immigration status, she did not have work authorization in the U.S. and could therefore not support herself. We were able to get a temporary order entered to cover her immediate needs and later settle the matter with terms that provided sufficient funds for her to start her life in India with dignity and without having to ask her parents for financial support.

Matter of N. R., Case #\*\*2097. This was an asylum matter that was filed in 1989 on behalf of the client, a married woman from Iran. She was in the U.S. with her two young daughters visiting her brother when she heard that the Iranian Government had raided her house, mistreated her husband

and shown him a warrant for her arrest. The reason: She had been disrespectful to the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran by complaining openly of prayers in school. At that time Nafisseh was a school teacher in Tehran teaching French. This case was not heard until 2006 by the Immigration Service. We prepared and filed her asylum application packet, which included asylum for her children and husband. This matter was approved without referral to the immigration court through my advocacy and presentation of her case. I provided a comprehensive presentation of the historical and political ramifications for a person in her situation in Iran. After extensive advocacy, her claim of asylum was approved. Her family lives in Washington State. The daughters are bright young ladies who are pursuing higher education. Unfortunately their father recently passed away due to a massive heart attack in Tehran. He had received his approval as well and was in the process of relocating to the U.S. to join his family.

City of Federal Way v. R.D., RALJ Case# \*\*-\*-\*\*\*75-4 SEA; (District Court Case# CA \*\*\*44FW). This case involved a woman from northern Africa who had entered a Sears store wearing colorful, traditional attire. The facts showed that she was profiled by security at the store based on her ethnicity and attire. When she tried to purchase an electronic system using her credit card, she was questioned by the security guard, and wrongfully accused of having an altered Driver's License. She was later charged with Possession of an Altered Driver's License and Obstructing a Public Officer. The case was tried to a jury by her first counsel. The record showed that during the trial the prosecuting attorney made improper remarks about her ethnicity, the fact that she was wearing Islamic attire in Court, and her exercise of her constitutional right to a jury trial. I took this case post conviction, and filed a RALJ appeal. The review Court agreed with our position; the case was reversed and remanded. The prosecuting attorney never re-filed.

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

1) Judge Pro-tempore (1994 to present as needed): This experience has been invaluable in acquiring judicial skills and experience as well as implementing those skills. I have been fortunate to have had this opportunity since 1994. I have presided over criminal, civil and infraction calendars. In these settings, I listened to testimony, made evidentiary rulings, decided cases and imposed sentences.

2) WSBA Hearing Office (2004 to present): As a Hearing Officer for the Washington State bar Association, I preside over disciplinary hearings. These matters are formal proceedings and are practically handled as Bench Trials. As a Hearing officer, I have handled several Disciplinary Hearings/Trials; currently I have been assigned to a case that is proceeding to trial. As a Hearing officer, I make evidentiary rulings, take testimony and make findings of fact. This decision making experience has further honed my appreciation of what is required of an unbiased "decision maker," and has strengthened my understanding of the judicial function.

3) WSBA Fee Arbitrator (1994 to present): Sitting as an Arbiter in fee dispute cases allowed me to gain experience as an unbiased decision maker, listening to both sides and seeing two different perspectives on the issue at hand.

My experience in these areas has enhanced my qualifications and abilities to serve as a judge. I have had first-hand experience being an adjudicator. In holding these hearings/trials, I had to put into practice what I believe are the most important and vital characteristics of a judge: to be knowledgeable about the issue at hand, to be fair to both sides, to keep an open mind, and to be patient and respectful to the parties. Although these attributes are often associated with judges, adopting them consistently is nevertheless a tremendous task for any judge to accomplish. My many opportunities to hold hearings and conduct arbitrations have given me an enhanced and true understanding of the importance of these qualifications.

4) While handling non-litigation immigration matters, e.g. preparing asylum applications or self petitions under the Violence Against Women Act, I gained an enhanced understanding of people's cultural differences. Only after I truly understood my clients and their issues was I able to present their cases and obtain relief for them. I believe that working with people and families of diverse backgrounds, from Australia and China to the Middle-East, Europe and Africa has broadened my perspective and understanding of diversity. It has also demonstrated that the standards used in our society do not always fit neatly when applied to people from totally different backgrounds or cultures.

5) I was also an appointed commissioner for the City of Bellevue Human Services Commission. We reviewed funding applications related to human services, familiarized ourselves with organizations and agencies throughout Bellevue and recommended priorities for the allocation of City resources to the City Council. As part of my involvement, I became familiar with the City's emerging human services and community needs, which included issues related to drug and alcohol treatment, the aging population, the meals on wheels program, and counseling services. I believe working collaboratively with the members of the Commission on these sorts of bread-and-butter issues was an experience that will enhance my ability to adjudicate fairly and equitably.

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

In most cases, the trial court is the last tribunal at which people seek justice for their case. The litigants look to the trial judge to examine the facts of the case carefully and impartially. The responsibility of the trial judge is two fold: 1) a judge has to be fair, smart, knowledgeable, detail-oriented, and respectful, allowing litigants and witnesses to be heard; 2) work to improve access to justice. In addition to providing accessibility for those with physical disabilities, the judge should be mindful of silent barriers to access, such as language barriers and insufficient literacy. The trial judge has the responsibility to make sure that the litigants all have access to justice, meaning that the proceedings are conducted in clear and easily understood language, using interpreters when necessary.

On the occasions when I sit as a pro-tem judge, I make sure that interpreters are available throughout the proceedings. In addition to providing written documents to the parties appearing before me, I make sure to read the documents out loud, to ensure that all parties understand their rights and waivers. It is my experience as a public defender and as a Pro-Tem judge that most people will not admit to a low literacy level in public. I believe that this is a silent barrier to justice, and that as a judge I have to be mindful of it.

Additionally, I believe that the trial judge has the responsibility of safeguarding both the rights of the accused and the interests of the public in the administration of criminal justice.

He/she has the responsibility to ensure that every proceeding is conducted with unhurried and quiet dignity, and that the integrity of the proceedings remain intact.

**EDUCATION BACKGROUND SUMMARY  
FOR PUBLICATION IN CANDIDATE EVALUATION REPORT**

The Municipal League's Candidate Evaluation Report is distributed to voters in print and on our website. It includes a summary of the candidate's education. Please summarize your education in 120 characters (letters, punctuation, and space all combined). The League will delete material that exceeds the space limit by beginning with the last entry. Suggested order is (degree) (subject) (school) (year, if desired).

**Note:** *If this question is left blank the League will not include education information in your candidate profile.*

J.D. University of Maryland, School of law: 1990  
B.A. Political Science, Tehran University: 1979

**CIVIC INVOLVEMENT SUMMARY  
FOR PUBLICATION IN CANDIDATE EVALUATION REPORT**

The Municipal League's Candidate Evaluation Report includes a summary of each candidate's civic involvement. Please summarize your civic involvement in the space below. We will make every attempt to include the information in the Candidate Evaluation Report as submitted. Due to space restrictions in the Report, your response is limited to 500 characters (letters, punctuation, and spaces all combined). It is important that you list your involvement beginning with the most important and ending with the least important. If you exceed the length of response permitted, or if the League should find it necessary to shorten responses for publication purposes, deletions will be made beginning with the last item listed.

**Note:** *This information will appear verbatim on the League's Candidate Evaluation Report. If this question is left blank, the Municipal League will not include information on your civic involvement in the Report.*

Check here if you would like the Municipal League to copy the first 500 characters from Question 4 to paste into this section.

**Volunteer**, Immigration Clinic, Seattle, WA (1996-2005); **Chair/Coordinator**, Immigration clinic (2003 – 2005); **Member**, Bellevue Breakfast Rotary Club (1993 – 2003; 2007 to present); **Trustee**, Overlake Hospital Foundation (1999 – 2001); **Commissioner**, City of Bellevue Human Services Commission (1997 – 2000); **Member**, City of Bellevue Probation Services Advisory Board (February 2008 to present); **Member**, Washington Athletic Club, Lectures Committee (2007 to present)