

DATE: April 15, 2010
TO: Board of Governors of the State Bar of California
FROM: Jonathan L. Wolff, Past Chair, Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation
SUBJECT: Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation Activities and Statistical Report for 2009

I am pleased to submit the 2009 Activities and Statistical Report of the Commission on Judicial Nominees Evaluation (JNE Commission). The report provides comprehensive information about the JNE Commission's extensive work during 2009.

Under Government Code Section 12011.5, the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California created the JNE Commission. The mission of the JNE Commission is to assist the Governor in the judicial selection process and to promote a California judiciary of quality and integrity by providing independent, comprehensive, accurate, and fair evaluations of candidates for judicial appointment.

In 2009, the JNE Commission evaluated a total of 175 judicial candidates for the trial and appellate courts, and the Governor made 61 appointments. The appointed judicial candidates were selected from a diverse cross section of counties throughout the State. The average number of evaluations for each commissioner was 11.

Under JNE Commission rules, a judicial candidate may be rated Exceptionally Well Qualified, Well Qualified, Qualified, or Not Qualified. Impressively, in 2009, seventy percent of the appointed judicial candidates were rated exceptionally well qualified or well qualified.

The JNE Commission could not function without the dedicated volunteers who comprise the commission – both attorneys and public members. Commissioners spend countless hours conducting investigations, talking with raters, and interviewing judicial candidates. The JNE Commission is a collegial group of volunteers who work tirelessly to ensure that evaluations are conducted in a fair and comprehensive manner. I am extremely proud to have served as chair of this incredible group.

I would also like to recognize the tremendous work of the State Bar staff, led by Senior Administrative Specialist, Heidi Schwab-Wilhelmi. The JNE Commission owes the entire staff its utmost thanks for the assistance they provide throughout the year. During my term as chair, Heidi was an invaluable advisor.

This is an exciting time for the JNE Commission. The commission is moving towards a paperless system both at the commission meetings and during its investigations. It is anticipated that in the future the commission will begin electronically distributing confidential comment forms to the legal community instead of mailing out thousands of individual forms for each

investigation. Once introduced to the legal community, this modernized and electronic system will be good for the environment and will also hopefully encourage greater participation by the legal community during the JNE Commission process.

It has been a great honor and pleasure to serve as chair of the JNE Commission from February 2009 to April 2010. I thank you for the opportunity to lead this fantastic group.