



**THE VILLAGE REFORM
DEMOCRATIC CLUB**

Questions for 2021 Judicial Candidates for NY City Civil Court

Response from Candidate (name): Christopher Chin

1. Why are you running for Civil Court Judge, and what experience(s) have prepared you for that office (please list all clerkships, lower court judgeships, and ALJ posts in detail)? Do you meet the *minimum* qualifications to serve on the New York City Civil Court¹?

I am running for Civil Court Judge because I want to make a difference and I believe my professional experiences and personal background will make me qualified to be a good judge. As a Chinese immigrant from Burma (now called Myanmar), a country ruled by a dictator at the time, I am deeply aware of how a society can have two systems of justice – one of the favored class and another for the rest.

My professional experience as a litigator for over 25 years trained me to analyze and interpret laws and I also developed a calm temperament to deal with any situation. I have experience practicing in each of the Civil and Supreme Courts in all five boroughs. I have tried cases to jury verdict in State and Federal courts. My extensive court experience provides me with a good perspective as to what lawyers and litigants need to do during a lawsuit, the obstacles and hurdles that need to be handled. Therefore, as a judge, my decisions will always consider the impact it will have on the litigants and lawyers.

I meet the minimum qualifications to serve on the NY City Civil Court as I have been admitted to practice since 1995.

2. Where did you earn your undergraduate degree, when, and in what studies?

I received a Bachelor of Science in Economics from SUNY Albany in 1990.

3. When did you receive your law degree(s), where, and in what specialties?

¹ To serve on this court, a judge must: be a New York City resident; admitted to practice as an attorney for at least 10 years of in-state law practice before taking office; be at least 18 years old; and under the age of 70 (retirement by December 31st of the year one turns 70 is [mandatory](#))

Note: NYC Civil Court consists of 3 parts: General Civil, Housing, and Small Claims. General Civil cases include matters where parties are seeking monetary relief up to \$25,000. The Housing Part hears landlord-tenant matters and cases involving maintenance of housing standards. The Small Claims Part hears cases where parties are seeking monetary relief up to \$10,000.

I received a Juris Doctor degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1994. My law school did not designate any specialties.

4. When and in what states are/were you qualified to practice law?

I am admitted to practice law in NY and NJ. I was admitted in both states in 1995.

5. Have you ever been disbarred, sanctioned, or disciplined?

No.

6. Have you completed the Bar Association Judicial review process? With what result(s)?

I have not completed the Bar Association Judicial review process.

7. List your employment history, and what types of cases/clients you've handled as a lawyer.

LAW OFFICES OF MARGARET G. KLEIN & ASSOCIATES, New York, NY

Trial Attorney (2006 – Present)

- Handle negligence cases from inception through trial involving construction accidents with claims of Labor Law violations, intentional torts, premises liability, elevator accidents, automobile accidents, and contractual indemnity
- Represented various entities and individuals that were sued, including building owners, managing agents, and retail establishments

CULLEN AND DYKMAN, LLP, Brooklyn, NY

Litigation Associate (1997-1999 & 2001-2006)

- Handled negligence cases including, toxic torts, Labor Law claims, premises liability and motor vehicle accidents from inception through trial in State and Federal Courts
- Represented various entities and individuals that were sued, including public utilities, building owners, and retail establishments

KRAL CLERKIN REDMOND RYAN & PERRY, New York, NY

Associate (1999-2001)

- Handled various negligence cases from inception to trial including attendance at conferences and mediations and oral argument of motions
- Represented various entities and individuals that were sued, including building owners, managing agents, and retail establishments

VICTOR GOMELSKY, P.C., New York, NY

Associate (1996-1997)

- Handled prosecution of plaintiff's negligence cases from inception to trial
- Represented individuals injured due to another's negligence

8. Please list political party affiliation(s) and activities which bear on your selection for judge.

I have been a Democratic all my life. I am a member of many democratic clubs, but I vote at the Samuel J. Tilden Democratic club. I have attended club meetings all across the borough of Manhattan so I can be aware of the different challenges facing the different neighborhoods and communities. I have been a volunteer arbitrator in Small Claims Court for several years. I have also volunteered at various free clinics to assist people, including the Pro Bono Clinic in

Chinatown run by the Asian American Bar Association of NY, the Monday Night Clinic run by the NYC Bar Association and the Help Desk in Civil Court Kings County. During the pandemic, I made wellness calls and calls to remind people to complete the census, organized by Councilmember Carlina Rivera's office and by Good Old Lower East Side ("GOLES"). I also assisted Assembly member Harvey Epstein in distributing reusable bags and PPE to people on the sidewalk. I also volunteer at the Fortune Society's mock interview program to assist formerly incarcerated individuals be prepared for the interview process.

9. Do you understand that, if you become a Civil Court Judge, you may nonetheless be assigned to oversee a Criminal Court or Family Court part, or even assigned as an Acting State Supreme Court judge? Are you willing and/or able to handle those assignments?

I do understand that if I am elected as a Civil Court Judge, I may be assigned to other courts. I would willingly accept any assignment and will prepare myself to be capable of handling the assignment. Throughout my career I have encountered legal issues that was novel to me and through research and consulting with others that know the subject matter, I was able to become familiar with that issue. In my current job as a trial attorney, I sometimes get cases assigned to me just weeks before the trial and sometimes need to get familiar with some legal issues that I have not dealt with before, but I have always been able to get up to speed in time for the trial. I shadowed a few judges in Criminal Court and Family Court to have a better understanding of the processes in those courts.

10. What are the major issues facing our court system, and how would you address them?

I believe the major issues facing our court system is the lack of diversity which I believes translates into a lack of equal access to justice. To quote US Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, "when people walk into a system and they don't see anyone who looks like them, it undermines confidence in that system". She added that there should also be diversity in life experience, not just gender, race. I would address this by promoting diversity in the court, at least in my court, and advocate for more diversity in the court system as a whole. I would also invest time and effort to encourage students in underrepresented communities to consider studying law and also not rule out a practice in litigation, which could lead to a judicial career.

Another issue facing the court system is the backlog due to the court closure during the pandemic. I would address this by trying to eliminate inefficiencies in the court system. As a judge, I would try to hold as many appearances virtually as possible so that attorneys can make better use of their time, without wasting time traveling. I would also be mindful and considerate of the time constraints of the self-represented and try to schedule hearings and testimony around their schedule if possible. I would also take an active role in trying to resolve cases at various stages of the litigation.

11. What crimes should be prosecuted as enacted in NY State law, and which decriminalized?

As a judicial candidate, I am restricted in taking a public position on potential legislation or advocating changes in the law. I will apply the law on cases that appear before me to the best of my abilities, while achieving the most justice for everyone that will be impacted by my decisions.

12. What if any penalties should be changed (raised or lowered), and with what civil consequences in the long term?

As a judicial candidate, I am restricted in making a public comment on any law, especially if there is even the slightest chance that I will be called upon to apply it. I can say that I believe any penalty for violating a law should be fair and proportional and will work to apply the law justly.

13. What is your opinion of the bail reform laws enacted in recent years. Which, if any, would you change, amend, or repeal?

I support the bail reform laws and feel that these laws put the focus of bail on where it should be –the risk of flight and incentive to return to court. I also believe that the bail reform laws may have saved many people from contracting COVID-19 and effectively ending up with a death sentence without a conviction. As a judicial candidate, I am restricted from commenting on these laws any further except to say that I will try to apply the law to achieve justice for all parties involved.

14. Have New York's attempts to eliminate racial and religious hatred and discrimination made us safer and more just as a City? If not, what needs fixing?

I do not know if the attempts have made us safer because I do not have any statistics, but I believe in the long run, it will make us all safer as more people are educated on these injustices. I believe more needs to be done to educate people so they can understand their own implicit biases, which will hopefully result in less bias crimes.

15. Who are the best jurists, and what characterizes true judicial temperament?

There are many great jurists on the bench currently and what they all have in common is that they are patient, compassionate, kind and have a good understanding of the law and how it impacts people.

THE VRDC THANKS YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSES.