



UNITED STATES SENATE

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DURBIN, DUCKWORTH ANNOUNCE SCREENING COMMITTEE, APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT IN THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today announced that they will begin accepting applications from those interested in serving as a Federal District Court Judge in the Central District of Illinois. The Senators will be assisted by a screening committee whose task is to review and vet District Court candidates and advise the Senators regarding the candidates’ qualifications and fitness for the position.

“Our constitutional responsibility to advise and consent is one of the most important duties we have in the Senate. As we make recommendations for lifetime judicial appointments, we will benefit from the guidance and insights of our distinguished screening committee,” the Senators said. **“We thank the members of the screening committee for their willingness to serve and look forward to recommending qualified and experienced individuals to the White House.”**

The Senators’ screening Committee in the Central District of Illinois will be chaired by the Honorable Ronald Spears, former Illinois Fourth Judicial Circuit Judge. The other members of the Central District Committee are Donald Jackson, Rebecca Johnson, Nicola Sharpe, and Ruth Waller.

Biographies of each member of the screening committee can be found below.

Application Process:

Applicants for the federal district court must submit a cover letter, resume, and a completed copy of this [questionnaire](#) to applications@durbin.senate.gov by 5 p.m. CT on Monday, May 23. Applicants are requested to incorporate their cover letter, resume, completed questionnaire, and any attachments to the questionnaire into a single PDF document if possible. Please note that in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the affidavit accompanying the questionnaire is not required to be notarized.

The application questionnaire is nearly identical to the one used by the Senate Judiciary Committee and will help provide insight into candidates' backgrounds and qualifications. The screening committee will review candidates and advise the Senators, who will make recommendations on potential nominees to the President. Once the President submits a nomination to the U.S. Senate, the nominee will be reviewed by the Senate Judiciary Committee, which Senator Durbin chairs, and will receive a vote in the Committee. If a nomination is approved by the Judiciary Committee, the nomination will be sent to the full Senate for consideration.

Screening Committee for the Central District of Illinois:

The Honorable Ronald Spears (ret.) (committee chair). Judge Spears served as a judge in the Fourth Judicial Circuit in Taylorville from 1993- 2015. From 1979-1993, he worked at Miley, Meyer, Austin, Spears and Romano P.C. in Taylorville and served for several years as the city attorney. Previously he served as a judicial law clerk to U.S. District Court Judge J. Waldo Ackerman in the Central District of Illinois. Currently he works as a mediator and arbitrator with Spears Dispute Resolution LLC. He has been active in many bar associations and served as president of the Illinois Judges Association. Judge Spears served in the Illinois Army National Guard from 1972-2006, retiring at the rank of colonel. He was in the Judge Advocate General's Corps. He has a B.A. from the University of Illinois and a J.D. from Southern Illinois University School of Law.

Donald Jackson. Mr. Jackson is a solo practitioner specializing in civil rights and workplace and disability discrimination. He is a former president of the Peoria chapter of the NAACP and the NAACP Illinois State Conference. Mr. Jackson was a former attorney for the National Labor Relations Board and the Peoria County Public Defender's Office. He received his J.D. from the University of Illinois College of Law.

Rebecca Johnson. Ms. Johnson is formerly a staff attorney with the Illinois Legislative Reference Bureau, providing legal advice and drafting services to both houses of the Illinois General Assembly and serving as the Illinois Correspondent to the National Conference of State Legislatures. She received her B.A. from the University of Illinois and her J.D. from the Northern Illinois University College of Law, and she served as a law clerk for the Honorable Robert W. Cook of the Illinois Fourth District Appellate Court.

Nicola Sharpe. Professor Sharpe is a Professor at the University of Illinois College of Law, where her research focuses on corporate governance, ethics, compliance and professional responsibility. She also serves as the Director of the Chicago Business Law Program and is an Associate Academic Director at the Center for

Professional Responsibility in Business and Society at the University of Illinois Gies College of Business. Prior to joining the College of Law in 2008, she served as a visiting assistant professor at Northwestern University School of Law and practiced at Shearman & Sterling LLP. She received a B.A. from Cornell University, an M.B.A. from Yale School of Management, and a J.D. from Yale Law School.

Ruth Waller. Ms. Waller formerly served as an Assistant State's Attorney in Macon County, where she served as the senior supervisor of the Child Support Division. Before her work in the State's Attorney's Office, she was a partner in the law firm of Johnson, Waller & Chiligris. Ms. Waller is a former president of the Springfield Coalition of Black Attorneys and has previously served on the boards of the Southern Illinois University School of Law, Millikin University, and Decatur Mental Health Center. She received her B.A. from the University of Illinois, her Doctorate in Ministry from Master's International University of Divinity in Evansville, Indiana, and her J.D. from Southern Illinois University School of Law.

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