



**SEYMOUR W. JAMES, JR.**

President, New York State Bar Association

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Honorable John J. Bonacic  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee  
509 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Chairman Bonacic and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write in support of the confirmation of Honorable Sheila Abdus-Salaam as an Associate Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals. Since 1967, the New York State Bar Association has evaluated candidates for the court and, since the State Constitution was amended to provide for the appointment of the court's judges, we have provided the Governor with our ratings of the candidates whose names have been submitted by the State Commission on Judicial Nomination. With respect to the present nomination, we have found Justice Abdus-Salaam to be well qualified to serve as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals.

I would like to outline the process by which our Association evaluates Court of Appeals candidates. We appoint a Committee to Review Judicial Nominations, comprised of 17 members and four alternate members, who represent every judicial district in the state. Committee members are experienced attorneys, selected to reflect diversity in race, ethnicity, gender and area of practice. Their practice settings range from solo practitioners to large law firms. When the Commission on Judicial Nomination releases its list of candidates for appointment to the Court of Appeals, the committee's chair appoints subcommittees to review the qualifications of each candidate and make a report to the full committee. The subcommittee members review biographical material provided by the candidates, read the candidates' writing samples, and interview colleagues and references, as well as litigants who have appeared before the judge. Finally, the subcommittees interview the candidates.

After completion of the subcommittee reviews, the committee meets as a whole to receive the subcommittee reports and to personally interview the candidates. The committee then votes to determine whether the candidates shall be rated "well qualified," "qualified," or "not qualified" for appointment to the Court of Appeals. In making their evaluations, the members are asked to consider the candidates' professional ability and experience, character, and temperament. Under the committee's guidelines, a "qualified" candidate is one who affirmatively demonstrates qualifications the committee regards as necessary for judicial office. A "well qualified" candidate is one who, in addition, possesses pre-eminent qualifications for judicial office. As a result of our committee's investigation and interview, it was the opinion of our committee that Justice Abdus-Salaam is well qualified for the Court of Appeals.

Justice Abdus-Salaam is an accomplished jurist who has devoted her career to public service. As a young lawyer, she worked at East Brooklyn Legal Services, conducting litigation on behalf of poor people in a variety of areas of practice. She then served as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Bureau, conducting civil rights litigation, and in the Real Estate Financing Bureau, which included

reviewing cooperative and condominium conversion offering plans and conducting fraud investigations. Finally, she served as General Counsel of the New York City Office of Labor Services.

Elected as a Judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York in 1992, Justice Abdus-Salaam presided over a wide variety of cases. She was elected as a Supreme Court Justice in 1994, presiding in both Criminal Term and Civil Term before being appointed to the Appellate Division in 2009. Throughout her judicial career, Justice Abdus-Salaam has been described by litigants as fair, reasonable, and possessing an excellent judicial temperament. Both prosecutors and defense attorneys applaud her keen intellect. Her colleagues have indicated that she possesses the ability to work with others in a collaborative manner, and her judicial writings demonstrate skilled legal analysis and clarity.

I am pleased to state that Justice Abdus-Salaam is a member of our Association and its Judicial Section. In addition, she is very active in the Metropolitan Black Bar Association and the Association of Black Women Attorneys. Among the awards she has received are the 2009 Metropolitan Black Bar Association Distinguished Jurist of the Year Award; the 2012 Westchester Black Bar Association's Hon. Constance Baker Motley Judicial Award; and the 2012 Respect for Law Alliance Distinguished Service Award.

Given Justice Abdus-Salaam's experience as a litigator, her extensive trial and appellate judicial experience, and her commitment to justice, we believe that she will serve the State of New York well as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals. Accordingly, on behalf of the New York State Bar Association, I am pleased to endorse Justice Abdus-Salaam's candidacy for the Court of Appeals and urge the confirmation of her appointment.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely yours,



Seymour W. James, Jr.

cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee  
Senator John Sampson, Ranking Member  
Senator Eric Adams  
Senator Neil Breslin  
Senator John DeFrancisco  
Senator Martin Malave Dilan  
Senator Adriano Espaillat  
Senator John Flanagan  
Senator Charles Fuschillo  
Senator Kemp Hannon  
Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson  
Senator Brad Hoylman  
Senator Andrew Lanza  
Senator Kenneth LaValle  
Senator Elizabeth Little  
Senator Michael Nozzolio  
Senator Thomas O'Mara  
Senator Bill Perkins  
Senator Diane Savino  
Senator Malcolm Smith  
Senator Michael Ranzenhofer  
Senator Toby Stavisky  
Senator Lee Zeldin