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Bar Association Votes to Admonish Court of Appeals Candidate Nathan Choi

SEATTLE, Washington (November 3, 2017) - The King County Bar Association has found that judicial candidate Nathan Choi has violated the bar's Fair Campaign Practices Guidelines. Mr. Choi is seeking election to the Washington Court of Appeals. The Association is forwarding formal complaints to the Commission on Judicial Conduct and the Public Disclosure Commission.

The Association's Board of Trustees held a special meeting on November 3 and reached the following decision:

1. Judicial candidate Nathan Choi failed to register his campaign with the Public Disclosure Commission in a timely manner as required by law. Mr. Choi first filed his registration with the PDC on October 12, not the end of May as required.
2. Mr. Choi's October 30 Seattle Times fullpage display advertisement, reproduced on his website, erroneously suggests to voters that he is already a judge. The advertisement includes the headline "Vote for Judge Nathan Choi." KCBA for many years has cautioned candidates for judicial office that such statements where the title "Judge" is used in front of a candidate's name can mislead voters and will result in the bar's public admonishment. All judicial candidates, even those seeking to become a judge, are obligated to follow the Code of Judicial Conduct according to the Washington Supreme Court.

Mr. Choi did not reply to the Association's request to respond or appear at the special meeting.

"KCBA admonishes candidate Nathan Choi for these violations of our fair campaign guidelines," said KCBA President Andrew W. Maron. "Unfair or potentially deceptive campaign conduct by judicial candidates can undermine public confidence in the courts unless the public is certain that such conduct will not be tolerated."

Because preserving the integrity of judicial offices is vital if public respect for the law and the courts is to be preserved, the bar has monitored judicial elections that take place in whole or in part in King County since 1948. The bar insists that all candidates fairly campaign so that contests for judicial office do not impair public confidence in the integrity of the judicial process.

Mr. Choi has also refused to cooperate in KCBA's judicial candidate evaluation process, where specific ratings about each candidate's qualifications are considered. The incumbent candidate, Judge Michael Spearman, did cooperate and is rated Exceptionally Well Qualified, which is the bar's highest rating.

Founded in 1886, the King County Bar Association is the largest voluntary bar association in the state of Washington, with over 5,500 members. As part of its mission it works with the judiciary to achieve excellence, equity, and accessibility in the administration of justice.

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