

Responses of John Z. Lee
Nominee to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois
to the Written Questions of Senator Amy Klobuchar

- 1. If you had to describe it, how would you characterize your judicial philosophy? How do you see the role of the judge in our constitutional system?**

Response: I believe that a judge must have a deep and abiding respect for the rule of law and should apply the controlling law to the facts before the court, regardless of his or her personal background or beliefs. A judge should also demonstrate judicial restraint and decide only the contested issues raised by the parties. Such a narrow approach to deciding cases is appropriate because judges are not permitted by our constitutional system to make new laws, but only to apply existing laws to the particular disputes raised by the parties before the court.

- 2. What assurances can you give that litigants coming into your courtroom will be treated fairly regardless of their political beliefs or whether they are rich or poor, defendant or plaintiff?**

Response: As a first generation immigrant to this country, I have developed a deep respect for the rule of law and for the principle that everyone should be treated fairly regardless of their racial or ethnic background, social-economic status or political beliefs. These are the very principles that attracted my parents to this country over 40 years ago and that provided me with the professional opportunities that I have enjoyed throughout my career. I believe that I have adhered to those principles throughout my professional and personal life and am deeply committed to them.

- 3. In your opinion, how strongly should judges bind themselves to the doctrine of stare decisis? How does the commitment to stare decisis vary depending on the court?**

Response: District judges must strictly apply the controlling precedents of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals of the Circuit in which they sit. I do not believe that district judges should refuse to follow controlling precedents under any circumstances.