



**PHOENIX MUNICIPAL COURT**  
**APPLICATION FOR JUDICIAL OFFICE**

**Applications may be completed and printed with this on-line form. Some questions allow limited response space. If additional space is needed, attachments may be added. Applications must be typed. PLEASE NOTE: The Rules of Procedure for the Judicial Selection Advisory Board for the City of Phoenix Municipal Court provide for public access to this application as follows:**

**Judicial Selection Advisory Board Rules of Procedure, Rule 8(D) provides:**

*Except as provided in subsection (2) below, information provided to the board by the applicant or by a third-party shall be presumed to be available to the public.*

*(1) The following shall be available to the public:*

*(a) The applicant's name, occupation, employer, relevant work history, any other information provided in response to section I of the application form, and any supplemental materials submitted by the applicant relating to Section I of the application form;*

*(b) Any information that is specifically authorized for release by the source of that information.*

*(2) The following information shall remain confidential throughout the application and appointment process until destroyed pursuant to the applicable Municipal Court document retention schedule.*

*(a) The applicant's home address, information regarding applicant's family, and all other information that is provided to the board in response to questions contained in Section II of the application form;*

*(b) Information provided in writing or orally to the board by third-parties regarding an applicant, and the third party's identity, unless the third-party specifically states in writing that the information may be made public;*

*(c) Notes of the individual board members that are generated for personal use only and not published to other members of the board;*

*(d) Any information that is provided to a member of the board after a promise of confidentiality is properly extended to the source by that board member pursuant to rule 9(B) or 10(B) of these rules;*

*(e) Any information obtained by or submitted to the board that is made confidential by other provisions of law.*

SECTION I – Public Information			
Last Name	First Name	MI	
Certa	Cynthia	A.	
<b>How many years have you resided in Arizona immediately preceding this application? 53</b>			
<b>Have you had at least five years practice of law? If no, describe what equivalent legal experience you have.</b>			
Yes. I have practiced law in Arizona for 42 years.			
<b>Arizona State Bar Number</b>		<b>Date of Admission</b>	
[REDACTED]		10/15/83	
Schools Attended (preparatory, college and law)	Dates: mm/dd/yy		Degree
Gerard Catholic High School	From: 08/XX/ 72	Through: 05/XX/76	High School Diploma
Arizona State University	From: 08/XX/ 76	Through: 05/16/80	Bachelor of Science, Business cum laude
Arizona State University College of Law	From: 08/XX/ 80	Through: 05/13/83	Juris Doctor

**1) Indicate major and minor fields of study.**

I graduated from Arizona State University, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, cum laude, on May 16, 1980.

I graduated from the Arizona State University College of Law, with a Juris Doctor degree, on May 13, 1983.

**3) Indicate all bar admissions, numbers, and dates.**

United States Supreme Court, 03/27/90

United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, 04/23/85

United States District Court for the District of Arizona, 04/15/85

State Bar of Arizona, [REDACTED] 10/15/83

**4) If you have been certified as a specialist by the Arizona State Bar, identify specialty.**

I am not certified as a specialist by the Arizona State Bar, although I have been practicing for 42 years.

**5) Explain if you have been denied admission to any State Bar.**

I have never been denied admission to any State Bar.

6) Current Job Title	Employer	Date(s) of Employment
Judge	Phoenix Municipal Court	From: 6/16/99 Through: Present
<b>7) Describe chronologically, providing dates, your law practice and relevant experience following your graduation from law school, specifically indicating the following:</b>		
<b>A. If you have served as a judge, indicate the court(s) and dates of service.</b>		
<p>Prior to becoming a Judge of the Phoenix Municipal Court, I was an Assistant City Prosecutor for the City of Phoenix for over fifteen years. I was an Assistant City Prosecutor in the Trial Bureau from Jan. 1984 - Aug. 1985, where I prosecuted over 55 jury trials to verdict and hundreds of bench trials. Thereafter, I was a Staff Attorney and Group Leader in the Motions &amp; Appeals Bureau from Aug. 1985 - 1988, before being promoted to Assistant Bureau Chief from Dec. 1988 - Dec. 1993, where I supervised and trained attorneys in motion and appellate advocacy; edited all higher court briefs to ensure high quality, well organized pleadings; provided continuing legal education; and handled high profile cases. From Jan. 1994 - Nov. 1995, I was the Assistant Training Attorney. I supervised and trained attorneys in effective trial advocacy, taught courtroom demeanor at the Phoenix Regional Police Academy and motion practice for the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys' Advisory Council. From Nov. 1995 - Sept. 1998, I was the Assistant Bureau Chief of the Special Prosecutions Bureau. I supervised and trained attorneys in civil drug forfeiture and agency prosecution, trained employees of other departments, and served on the editorial board of The DRE (an international quarterly about the problem of the impaired driver). From Sept. 1998 - June 1999, I was the Assistant Bureau Chief of the Community Prosecutions Bureau, assisting communities to resolve their problems prior to the intervention of the criminal justice system and devising programs to deal with gang violence.</p> <p>I have been a Judge of the Phoenix Municipal Court for the last 26 years, from June 16, 1999 - present. In that capacity, I preside over jury and non-jury trials and pretrial disposition conferences of criminal misdemeanors and civil traffic violations; conduct motion hearings (e.g., dismiss/suppress) and sentencing hearings (e.g., restitution, aggravation/mitigation hearings); impose sentences; research case law; prepare written opinions, where appropriate; conduct hearings and rule on requests for Orders of Protection, Injunctions Against Harassment, and Vicious Dog Petitions.</p> <p>I previously updated the DUI Reference Manual for the Judicial College of Arizona and DUI Case Compendium for the Governor's Office of Highway Safety; taught motion practice for New Judge Orientation. I also preside or have over Homeless Court, Community Court, Veteran's Court (in Stand Downs), and Trucking dockets.</p> <p>I was a previous member of the Judicial Training Committee and Judicial Policies and Procedures Committee and am currently on the Judge Pro Tempore Committee and the Community Relations Committee.</p>		
<b>B. If you have served as a clerk to a judge, indicate the name of the judge, the court, and the dates.</b>		
N/A		

**C. If you practiced alone, indicate the addresses and dates.**

I have always been a public servant.

**D. Provide the names, addresses and dates of law firms or law offices, companies, governmental agencies, or other organizations for which you have been employed, and describe the nature of that employment.**

As detailed in question 7, I was employed as an Assistant City Prosecutor for the City of Phoenix, from January 3, 1984, until I was appointed a Judge of the Phoenix Municipal Court, on June 16, 1999, until the present.

The current address of the Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office is 300 West Washington Street, Floor 8, Phoenix, AZ 85003-1611. The address of the Phoenix Municipal Court is 300 West Washington Street, Phoenix, AZ 85003.

**E. Describe the types of major clients you have served and mention areas of law in which you have specialized or focused. Give details of any service you have provided in a fiduciary capacity.**

I have been a public servant my entire legal career, with a primary focus in criminal law, although as a judge I also handle civil traffic offenses as well as the commercial motor vehicle violations (the trucking docket) for the court. I also preside over civil protective orders (hearings and petitions), such as Orders of Protection, Injunctions Against Harassment, and Vicious Dog cases (for further details, see question 7).

As a prosecuting attorney, I similarly handled criminal misdemeanors and civil traffic offenses occurring within the city limits, as well as civil forfeiture and abatement proceedings (for further details, see question 7).

<b>8) Indicate your frequency of appearances in court as a lawyer:</b>			
<b>Describe the nature of your appearances, giving dates, court names, and the nature of the proceedings.</b>			
As an Assistant City Prosecutor in the Trial Bureau, from Jan. 1984 - Aug. 1985, I would appear daily in the Phoenix Municipal Court. As an Assistant Bureau Chief in the various Bureaus, I appeared less frequently unless prosecuting my own caseload or training attorneys, as my job responsibilities also included attending meetings with other city departments and managing the day-to-day operations of the Bureau.			
<b>A. Indicate the percentage of these appearances between the listed court types. *Currently</b>			
Federal Courts 0%	State Courts 0%	Justice Courts 0%	
City Courts 100%		Administrative Boards or Commissions 0%	
<b>B. Indicate the percentage of your litigation practice. *Currently</b>			
Civil 15%	Criminal 80%	Traffic 5%	Administrative 0%
<b>C. State the number of cases you tried to verdict or judgment (rather than settled), for each of the following:</b>			
Sole Counsel - Hundreds	Chief Counsel – Hundreds	Associate Counsel – Hundreds	
<b>D. What percentage of these trials was:</b>			
Jury 5%		Non-Jury 95%	

E. Describe not more than five significant litigated matters in which you participated and give the citations, if reported. Give a capsule summary of the substance of each matter and a succinct statement of the particular significance. Please identify the party or parties whom you represented; describe the nature of your participation in the matter; and the final disposition. Please state, as to each matter: 1) the date of the matter; 2) the name of the court and the judge before whom the matter was presented; and 3) the names and addresses of counsel for the other parties.

1) As a prosecutor, I handled both the evidentiary hearing in the Phoenix Municipal Court and the appeal in *State v. Ricke*, 161 Ariz. 462, 778 P.2d 599 (App. 1989). *Ricke* allowed me to be part of shaping the law on the use of horizontal gaze nystagmus (HGN) in DUI prosecutions. The appellate court agreed with the State's position that HGN results indicating a blood alcohol content of 0.10% or more were admissible to corroborate the challenged accuracy of a breath test. (Judge: Hon. N. Pike Johnson; Defense attorney: M. Jeremy Toles, 1010 E. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85034)

2) One of the most important cases I argued in the Arizona Court of Appeals was *State v. Mercurio*, 153 Ariz. 336, 736 P.2d 819 (App. 1987). This case originated in the Phoenix Municipal Court. As the attorney for the State, I defended the validity of the Phoenix City Charter provision allowing for the appointment of judges pro tempore by the chief presiding judge to preside over cases in the Phoenix Municipal Court. At stake were literally thousands of misdemeanor convictions. Preparing this case brought a realization of how our court system was formed, how it functions, and from where it derives its power – our Charter. The Court of Appeals affirmed the convictions, finding that the City Charter permitted the appointment of judges pro tempore. (Judges: Hon. Lindsay B. Ellis and Hon. Louraine Crawford; Defense attorney: Richard D. Coffinger, 6838 N. 58<sup>th</sup> Drive, Glendale, AZ 85301).

3) I was chosen to defend the constitutionality of Phoenix's nocturnal juvenile curfew ordinance in *Matter of the Appeal in Maricopa County, Juvenile Action No. JT9065297*, 181 Ariz. 60, 887 P.2d 599 (App. 1994), a case originating in juvenile court. The Court of Appeals found that the ordinance's burden on the rights of minors was justified by significant state interests and that the ordinance was neither vague nor overbroad. (Judge: Hon. L. Popilek; Defense attorney: Gary Peter Klahr, 917 W. McDowell Road, Phoenix, AZ 85007).

Appellate victories are easy to discuss. Trials are another matter. Most of my learning how to be a good attorney came gradually on a case-by-case basis in city court. The names of judges and defense attorneys have faded. What has had the greatest impact on my formation were people whose stories will never make front page news.

**9) Describe any significant arbitration, mediation, or litigation experience not discussed above.**

When I was an assistant city prosecutor, I was routinely assigned to be an arbitrator on a variety of Maricopa County Superior Court cases (primarily tort motor vehicle or contract cases). Given my length of time on the bench, I no longer kept those materials.

**10) If you are or have been a judge, describe not more than five significant cases you have tried, or opinions you have written. For opinions, give the citations if the opinions were reported as well as citations to any appellate review of such opinions. Finally, please attach copies of the opinions, to include any appellate review of those opinions.**

Despite our heavy caseload, I regard each case as if it were the most important one on the docket because I know it is to the person appearing before me. Oftentimes, significant liberty or property interests are at stake, requiring that I remain completely focused and bring the absolute best of my knowledge and decision-making skills to bear. It is not enough to pursue justice; people must believe that they have had the opportunity to be heard by an unbiased court.

In almost 27 years on the bench, I only have been reversed twice; once early in my career when I made the mistake of agreeing to talk to the attorneys in my chambers and an important fact was not later stated on the record. It taught me an important lesson about record completeness. The second time it was because I followed precedent.

**11) Please describe your experience in the following areas:**

**A. Managerial Skills**

As an Assistant City Prosecutor for the City of Phoenix, I was the Assistant Bureau Chief in the following Bureaus: Motions & Appeals, Training Unit, Special Prosecutions, and Community Prosecutions. In each of those Bureaus, I had primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of those Bureaus. I trained attorneys, wrote numerous training manuals, provided budget input, and developed operational procedures.

**B. Supervisory Skills**

As a supervisor in the above listed Bureaus while with the Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office, I was responsible for daily scheduling, reviewing higher court pleadings, training attorneys and staff, and resolving personnel issues (e.g., work disputes, substance abuse issues, mental health referrals).

**C. Budget**

My Budgeting input was in recommending what services or positions could be cut without affecting our service to the community and making procedural recommendations as to how my Bureaus could work more efficiently to save money.

**D. Personnel**

As a supervisor for large groups of attorneys and staff while employed by the Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office, I was routinely given the task of resolving personnel issues, from problems at home, substance abuse issues, health issues (including mental health issues).

**12) Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business, or profession other than the practice of law or holding judicial office? Yes If yes, please provide details, including dates.**

Almost all my adult life has been spent as an attorney or a judge. Some jobs I have held in the past include interior designer (1983), digital watch repair person (1979), and fabric salesperson (1976).

**13) Are you now, or have you ever been an officer or director or otherwise engaged in the management of any business enterprise? No If yes, give details, including the name of the enterprise, the nature of the business, the title or other description of your position, the nature of your duties, and the terms of your service.**

Although I have not been an officer or otherwise engaged in the management of any business enterprise, for many years I have been the Judge-President of the Lorna Lockwood Inn of Court. Our mission, as stated by the Americans Inns of Court, is: "To inspire the legal community to advance the rule of law by achieving the highest level of professionalism through example, education and mentoring."

**14) Is it your intention to resign such position and withdraw from any participation in the management of any of such enterprises if you are appointed? N/A If no, please explain.**

**15) Have you ever been sued by a client or a party? Yes If yes, give details, including dates.**

In the mid-1990s, while I was with the Phoenix City Prosecutor's Office, two defendants filed a lawsuit in District Court against me and other city employees, claiming that the zoning violations with which they had been charged were fraudulent. They later withdrew their lawsuit and were convicted of misdemeanors in city court.

**16) Have you published any legal or other books or articles? Yes If yes, please list them, giving the citations and dates.**

In my early years as a judge, I made extensive revisions to the DUI Reference Manual for the Judicial College of Arizona. For about 20 years, I also published a DUI Case Compendium, summarizing all Arizona and United States Supreme Court decisions of relevance to limited jurisdiction judges.

As a prosecutor, I developed a 25-chapter manual for the prosecution of impaired drivers, including topics from arrest to sentencing.

**17) Are you in compliance with the continuing legal education requirements applicable to you? If yes, list the courses and dates of attendance for the last two (2) years.**

Arizona Judicial Conference 2025

- 6/25/25 Synthetic Media  
Criminal Year Review  
Evidence for Limited Jurisdiction Judges  
Protective Orders
- 6/26/25 Judicial Security  
U.S. Supreme Court Updates  
Hot Topics in Judicial Ethics  
Courts Under Attack: Preventing Cyber Intrusions
- 6/27/25 Law & Film  
How to Spot BS in Statistics

Arizona Judicial Traffic Conference 2025

- 12/4/25 Automated Vehicles: Technology, Policy and the Law  
MVD Updates  
“Hands On Arizona Traffic Laws”: A Demonstration Lab  
Hot Topics in Arizona Traffic Law
- 12/5/25 CDL Updates

Arizona Judicial Conference 2024

- 6/18/24 Admired Leadership  
Sandbagging/Skulduggery  
Evidence Updates for Limited Jurisdiction Judges  
Criminal Year in Review
- 6/19/24 All Rise: Effects of Blind Justice  
Hot Topics in Judicial Ethics  
Limited Jurisdiction Updates – Caselaw  
Computer and Network Security
- 6/20/24 Law & Film  
Passing of the Gavel

I have an additional 16 hours of CLE/COJET through monthly presentations through my Inn of Court, such as the United States Supreme Court’s Shadow Docket and an ethics presentation by a representative from the State Bar on AI.

**18) Have you taught any courses on law or lectured at bar associations, conferences, law school forums, or continuing legal education seminars? If yes, please describe by providing the name of the course, the subject matter, the date and the place.**

Early in my career as a judge, I gave lectures on Search and Seizure Law and Motion Practice for New Judge Orientation. I have presented Case Law Updates at a Judicial Conference and various Arizona Judicial Traffic Conferences for the Governor’s Office of Traffic and Highway Safety.

As a prosecutor, I taught numerous courses in motion practice for the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys’ Advisory Council; courtroom demeanor for the Phoenix Regional Police Academy, Developmental Services Department, and Neighborhood Services Department; Legal Aspects of Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus for the Phoenix Regional Police Academy; crime abatement for various city departments and neighborhood associations; and basic criminal law to interns and attorneys as the Assistant Training Attorney and the Assistant Appeals Bureau Chief.

**19) List any honors, prizes, awards, or other forms of recognition which you have received.**

Last year, I was honored to be nominated by my Board of Directors of the Lorna Lockwood Inn of Court for the Lewis F. Powell, Jr. Award, a national award from the American Inns of Court (copies of letters of support attached). It is presented to someone “with exemplary service to the legal profession in the areas of professionalism, ethics, and civility.” While not selected, I was gratified to be recognized by friends and colleagues for my devotion to guiding younger judges and attorneys to reach their potential, encouraging the return of civility to our profession, and actively volunteering in the community.

In 1991, while with the Phoenix City Prosecutor’s Office, I received the City of Phoenix Excellence Award for my volunteer work reading to elementary school children. I also was part of a group nominated for that award in 1994 for training excellence and in 1997 for helping to clean up zoning problems in Phoenix. Additionally, I was nominated three times as Prosecutor of the Year by my supervisors and peers (an award by the Arizona Prosecuting Attorneys’ Advisory Council). I also was selected as a member of Valley Leadership Class XIX and was an author and note and comment editor for Law Review, when I attended the Arizona State University College of Law.

**20) List any public offices held and dates.**

N/A

**21) List memberships and activities in professional organizations, including offices held and dates.**

As previously mentioned, I am the Judge President for the Lorna Lockwood Inn of Court and have been for many years. I also have been a member of the American Judges Association, Arizona Women's Lawyers Association, and the Maricopa County Bar Association. Additionally, I was a member of Valley Leadership Class XIX.

***Optional: List memberships and activities in civic organizations, including offices held.***

As a member of the Court's Community Relations Committee (CRC), I have packed food boxes for St. Mary's Food Bank on numerous occasions, distributed Easter baskets for the Phoenix Rescue Mission, and participated in Reading Week and spoken about the role of a judge in local schools. Individually, I have welcomed countless students into my courtroom and shared my passion for our justice system.

I have been a lector and extraordinary minister at my church for about thirty-five years and have assisted yearly with a walkathon to raise money for children with special needs, hosted by local synagogues (Jonathan's Walk for Friendship). One of my most joyful contributions is sharing my love of reading with school children, for which I received the Phoenix Excellence Award about thirty-five years ago. For most years since then, I have shared this gift with students at elementary schools with underprivileged, high-poverty students and currently am a lunchtime reader for third and fourth grade students at the Children First Leadership Academy in Phoenix.

**22) List vocational interests and hobbies.**

I have numerous interests outside the practice of law. I have studied voice for years and enjoy participating in sing-alongs with friends. I am a season ticket holder for the Gammage Broadway series and a founding member of my Trivia Team (“Just for Fun”). I also enjoy swimming, reading, stitchery, scuba diving, world travel, and photography.

**23) Has any complaint of professional misconduct ever been filed, in any jurisdiction, where any form of disciplinary action has been taken against you? Yes If yes, when and where? How was it resolved?**

In approximately 1992, a disgruntled employee filed a complaint with the Arizona State Bar against me and other supervisors in retaliation for being asked to advance the date of her resignation. The charge was dismissed by the State Bar.

**24) Have you ever been convicted of any misdemeanor or felony, or violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice in the United States, or any foreign country? Yes If yes, when and where? How was it resolved?**

In 1982, I received a parking ticket for parking too close to a stop sign (which at that time was a criminal offense). I pled guilty and my fine was suspended.

**25) Phoenix City Code (“P.C.C.”), Section 2-96(C)(3) provides that merit shall be the primary consideration for the Judicial Selection Advisory Board in making recommendations to the City Council for appointment to judicial office. Under P.C.C. § 2-96(C)(3) and consistent with the Arizona Constitution (see AZ Const. Art. 6 § 37(C)), the Judicial Selection Advisory Board has the duty to consider the diversity of the City’s population. Please provide any information about yourself (e.g., your heritage, background, life experiences, etc.) that you believe is relevant to this consideration.**

I grew up in the northwest suburbs of Philadelphia. None of my grandparents were born in this country but they worked hard and made a better life for themselves and their families in this land of opportunity. My father, a brilliant chemist with 13 patents to his name, was the first in his family to graduate from college. He, along with my mother, taught my brothers and me the importance of an education, a strong work ethic, honesty, integrity, and being kind to others. I chose a career in public service to give back as I had been blessed.

**26) Include any further information relative to your candidacy or qualifications that you wish to transmit to the Judicial Selection Advisory Board at this time.**

I have devoted my entire legal career to the Phoenix Municipal Court system, 15.5 years as an assistant city prosecutor and 26.5 years as a judge. I care about our court system, not just my court family but the people who appear before me, whether they are attorneys, defendants, victims, witnesses, or jurors.

We are the largest municipal court in the nation. I have many ideas as to how we can be even better. For example, I would like to bring back the Judicial Policies and Procedures Committee, where judges can brainstorm as to how to improve operations. We need to restructure our judicial training program. I have only recently begun presiding over Community Court, but I already have ideas as to how it can be improved to be more efficient.

We need someone at the helm with experience, devotion, and determination to carry us into the future. I hope to be that person. Thank you.