

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**NOVEMBER 2020 FAIRFAX GENERAL DISTRICT COURT JUDICIAL SCREENING**

**JOHN ARA KASSABIAN**

John Kassabian resides in Oakton, Virginia. He is a 1988 graduate of Old Dominion University, and received his J.D. in 1993 from the District of Columbia School of Law. Mr. Kassabian is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Court of Appeals of Virginia and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit. Mr. Kassabian has been the recipient of many honors including the Fairfax Bar Association's Presidents award for 2011-2012, 2012-2013, and 2017-2018 and the American Inns of Court-George Mason-Master. He presently serves on the Board of Directors for the Fairfax Bar Association and is on the Special Committee on Lawyer Referral for the Virginia State Bar.

**EXPERIENCE AND LEGAL ABILITY**

Mr. Kassabian began his career in private practice in 1996. From 1997-2002 he served as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Prince William County and then Fairfax County. In 2002 he returned to private practice at Kassabian & Kassabian, P.L.C. From May of 2010 through the present he has served as Fairfax City Prosecutor. He is currently the sole owner of Kassabian & Kassabian, P.L.C. Approximately 60% of the time he works as a prosecutor, and 40% of the time as a criminal defense attorney.

Mr. Kassabian was appointed as a Fairfax County Substitute Judge of the General District Court and Juvenile Domestic Relations District Court for 3 terms – 2007, 2017, and 2019. He sits about two days a month in these Courts where he hears cases of all types, including criminal and civil.

**FAIRNESS AND TEMPERAMENT**

The Committee was impressed with Mr. Kassabian's mien and presence. Mr. Kassabian demonstrated an excellent understanding of the importance of professionalism and civility as these qualities relate to a candidate for judicial selection. He rightly expressed the value of his experience serving as a substitute judge. In his interview and in all the experiences with the members of the Committee in courtrooms over his many years of practice, Mr. Kassabian exuded patience and a temperament desired in a judicial appointment. He clearly understands the need for balance in running an efficient courtroom while, at the same time, giving people a chance to be fully heard. It is the opinion of the Committee that Mr. Kassabian would execute his duties as a judge with dignity, fairness, and a well-reasoned approach to the administration of justice that would serve the bar and the community well. The Committee noted that Mr. Kassabian as a judge would be a valuable asset to the bench and to the community.

**PROFESSIONALISM AND INTEGRITY**

This candidate demonstrated a high degree of professionalism and integrity. The Committee noted Mr. Kassabian's high level of involvement in a myriad of Fairfax Bar and community activities for which he volunteered his time including, but not limited to, the State Bar Disciplinary Committee, the FBA Board of Directors, FBA General Counsel, FBA Secretary, FBA Treasurer,

the FBA General District Court Committee (where he served as Chairman 2009-2013 and then Co-Chairman 2013-2014), Ombudsman of the FBA General District Court Judicial Feedback Program, and the George Mason Moot Court Program.

## **OVERALL EVALUATION**

The Committee found Mr. Kassabian impressive in his breadth of experience and desire to serve litigants in the General District Court. Notably, Mr. Kassabian has involvement, knowledge, and skill, in every aspect of the General District Court including criminal prosecution as well as defense, actual judicial work as a three time appointed substitute judge, as well as civil work both as a private lawyer and as a sub-judge (the candidate did note his civil experience was mostly in Prince William County, however, the Committee does not hold that against him.) Mr. Kassabian meets, and in almost all instances exceeds, the requirements of experience, intellect, fairness, temperament, professionalism, and integrity to be appointed as a General District Court Judge in Fairfax County.

## **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: RECOMMENDED**