

# Judicial Nominations Glossary

## **ABA Rating**

The nonpartisan American Bar Association (ABA) has traditionally evaluated judicial candidates before they are nominated. ABA ratings are based on objective assessments of candidates' competence, integrity, and temperament. And, because the ABA uses a confidential review system, it solicits candid feedback that elected officials may not obtain through their own vetting procedures. By honoring the ABA's historic role in the judicial nominations process, the Senate will confirm more qualified judges.

## **Blue slip**

The "blue slip" is a 100-year-old custom in the US Senate. The blue slip is a blue-colored piece of paper returned by a senator from the nominee's home state signaling approval of the nominee. Unless blue slips are returned by both senators, the Senate typically refuses to proceed with the consideration of a judicial nominee. The blue slip is an important means by which all senators can exercise their constitutional "advice and consent" duties.

## **Current Judicial Vacancy**

A judicial vacancy becomes current when a judge retires or otherwise leaves the bench, leaving a seat on the court empty.

## **Future Judicial Vacancy**

Typically, a federal judge will announce his or her plans to retire on a predetermined date in the future. When a judge announces their plan to retire, the process of filling the seat may begin. The future vacancy becomes current when the judge actually leaves his or her seat.

## **Judicial Emergency**

Official designation by the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the United States Courts describing courts that have been unable to run at full capacity, some for an extended period of time, and have an excess caseload due to a lack of judges.