

Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

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1. Why are you qualified and well-suited to serve as a judge on the court for which you are running?

I am qualified and well-suited to be a judge based on my legal career of over 20 years, which has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in public service, with a solid work ethic focused on making a positive difference. I have served as an Assistant City Solicitor, Legal Counsel for the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, Legislative Assistant to former Councilmember, Augusta Clarke, General Counsel to the Parking Authority, and Director of the Minority Business Enterprise Council. Currently, I am maintaining a small business law practice.

People coming into the court system deserve to be treated with respect, fairness, and equality under the law, and a judge must listen to all sides and then render decisions based on a thorough understanding of the facts, and knowledge of the law. In my career, I have been actively involved with promoting diversity and inclusion, and understand the importance of having respect and sensitivity for diverse communities. As a judge, respecting diversity is crucial because people are coming to court with varied backgrounds, and life experiences and should be treated with dignity and respect.

How I would improve the court system - The judiciary and attorneys should be in touch with the needs of the communities that they serve. Increasing public confidence in the justice system is dependent on people knowing the decision-makers, trusting the decision-makers, and understanding the legal process. I would work with the court administration to develop activities for judges and court personnel to be more active in the community, particularly with youth. In my view, these programs should include making community involvement a mandatory responsibility that is part of being a public elected official, as other jurisdictions have done.

2. Did you receive a rating of “recommended” or higher from the state or local bar association? If not, why not?

I received a rating of “Recommended” from the Philadelphia Bar Association.

3. If you are an incumbent judge, what’s a recent instance in which you acted to preserve your judicial independence? If you are an aspiring judge, how do you plan to remain independent if elected to the bench?

An independent judiciary is crucial to the administration of justice in our courts. As an aspiring judge, I’m committed to establishing, maintaining, enforcing, and observing standards of conduct in my courtroom that would preserve the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

4. A number of Pennsylvania judges have been sanctioned for campaign activities, ex parte dealings, and other alleged misconduct. How can the state’s judiciary promote ethical behavior among judges and court staff?

Judges are required to respect and comply with the law and to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. Recent events involving the misconduct of certain PA judges have eroded public confidence in the judicial system.

The PA Supreme Court is moving in the right direction to promote ethical behavior in PA courts by implementing the ongoing review of procedural rules and existing canons of judicial conduct, in addition to disciplining certain judges. Additionally, in October 2010, the PA Supreme Court instituted the Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees, which includes provisions that protect employees from retaliation for good faith reporting of wrongdoing in the court system, and requires judicial employees to report violations of the Code of Conduct, or any policy of the court system without fear of retaliation.

While the PA Supreme Court has no direct authority over the Judicial Conduct Board, an independent agency established by the Pennsylvania Constitution, the Board has overhauled its rules, and is having its procedures reviewed. After the completion of the review, the Conduct Board and the PA Supreme Court have indicated that a report will be released to the public.

5. If you believe that gender, racial, ethnic, class or other forms of bias can infect the justice system, how will you work to keep your courtroom as bias-free as possible?

Since March, 2005, the Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness, consisting of judges, attorneys, legislators, and community advocates, appointed by the PA Supreme Court has been meeting to implement recommendations from the Court’s report, “*Racial and Gender Bias in the Justice System*”.

The Commission has been working with the following categories to eliminate bias from the court system; Litigants with Limited English Proficiency; Employment and Appointment Practices of the Courts; Gender,

Racial and Ethnic Bias in Jury Selection; Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault; Sentencing Disparities in the Criminal Justice System; Indigent Defense in PA; Gender, Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Juvenile Justice System; Gender, Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Imposition of the Death Penalty; and Perceptions and Occurrences of Gender, Racial and Ethnic Bias in the Courtroom.

As a judge, I would work to keep my courtroom as bias-free as possible by instilling a culture of treating all persons with fairness and respect, in addition to actively participating in the development and implementation of the Commission's recommendations to eliminate bias; as well as participating in community outreach to promote better understanding.