

Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Elinore O'Neill Kolodner**

JUDICIAL POST: Judge of Court of
Common Pleas, Philadelphia County

POLITICAL PARTY: Democrat

CAMPAIGN E-MAIL and WEBSITE:
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"Elinore O'Neill Kolodner for Judge"



1. Why are you qualified and well-suited to serve as a judge on the court for which you are running? For 32 years I have practiced law, representing average Philadelphians, particularly in litigation in Family Court and Orphans' Court matters. My family has a long tradition of service to this City, my father, Joseph F. O'Neill was the Police Commissioner, my uncle Joseph B. McKenna was the Deputy Fire Commissioner, two other uncles served as police officers and firefighters. My young nephew is a police officer. It is my privilege now with my family grown, to offer my years of experience to the City by serving our community as a Judge.

I represent clients in the areas that most effect their daily lives, issues of custody, child support, divorce, protection from abuse, guardianships, abuse of Powers of Attorney, Will disputes. It is my hope to put that experience to good use as a jurist.

2. Did you receive a rating of "recommended" or higher from the state or local bar association? If not, why not? I did not receive a rating of Recommended from the Philadelphia Bar Association. It is my understanding that my lengthy experience as a litigator in Family and Orphans' Court was not viewed as "trial experience" by the Bar Committee. Further, I am outspoken about a continuing practice by many members of the Bar of "double booking" court appearances, that is scheduling themselves to be in two or sometimes three courtrooms on the same day at the same time, even though they know of the conflict well in advance. This practice unnecessarily delays scheduled hearings, and it is unfair to the opposing party and his or her attorney, who appear on time and have not been notified of the double-booking. While the double-booked attorney is moving from courtroom to courtroom, the opponent and her witnesses are sitting waiting, being billed by the hour by her attorney, often for two or three hours. The witnesses grow restless, feel their time is being wasted, and the Court schedule of 20 to 40 cases is being continuously reshuffled by the court clerk to accommodate the missing in-action double-booked attorney. I believe this practice is unprofessional and needs to be managed by the judiciary out of respect to litigants and their witnesses. For these views, I have been deemed by the Bar to be "inflexible".

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? I have not sought the endorsement of the Democratic party. I am not a politician and I

never have been. My independence is legendary and is evident in my selection of clients and cases to pursue. I have been a sole practitioner for 17 years and owe no allegiance to any law firm, or the District Attorney, or Public Defender. I represent Philadelphians of all economic, racial, and political backgrounds, from neighborhoods all over the City. I am proud to include among my clients many Philadelphia police officers and I have been endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police.

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 prevent discipline scandals of the type seen recently? Judges in Pennsylvania are lawyers first and foremost, and all lawyers in Pennsylvania are held to certain ethical standards in daily practice and in life itself. I take those standards very seriously. The state's judiciary as a whole needs be mindful of unethical conduct by fellow jurists and they need to report such conduct to the Pennsylvania Disciplinary Board immediately, just as any practicing lawyer needs to report such unethical conduct by a fellow attorney.

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? I am completely without bias, and accept those I encounter as people and do not judge by race, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, as is reflected in the diversity of my clients. I would expect those same standards to apply to anyone appearing in my courtroom. If someone is not providing a bias-free environment, I would suggest appropriate education to remedy the issue.