

# Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Fran Shields**

Judicial Position: Philadelphia Court of Common  
Pleas

Political Party: Democrat / Republican (cross  
filed)

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Questions



- Why are you qualified and well-suited to serve as a judge on the court for which you are running?*** My background and career path are not typical of other judicial candidates. However, my life experiences as well as my legal experiences have prepared me to be a Judge on the Court of Common Pleas. I am a life long resident of Philadelphia. Born and raised in Northeast Philadelphia, I still live in the area with my wife Karen and our three children. I am a 1971 graduate of Cardinal Dougherty High School. After high school I went into the Philadelphia Building Trades. After serving my apprenticeship in the Sprinkler Fitters Union, Local 692, I served on the Union's Executive Board and Negotiating Committee for 10 years. While working on constructions sites during the day, I put myself through St. Joseph's University at night and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in the Industrial Relations in 1982. I then put my through Temple University Law School graduating in 1987. I have been practicing law in and around the Philadelphia area for the past 22 years. I have an active litigation practice. In the litigation arena, I have represented unions, individuals and corporate entities in a wide array of disputes, including; Wage and Hour disputes, Fair Labor Standard Act, products liability, premises liability, motor vehicle liability, workers' compensation and construction litigation. I also have extensive experience representing municipalities, officers of municipalities and municipal authorities, as well as, state agencies throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in cases involving Civil Rights Violations, Defamation/Slander, High Speed Police Pursuits, Assault and Security issues and Construction and Premises Liability. I am admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, the Middle district of Pennsylvania and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third District. Understanding legal process, the rules of evidence and the rule of law is essential to being an effective jurist. However, there are other qualities and characteristics that may be less technical but just as esstential. We need Judges, who understand

their duty to remain open minded, independent and impartial. I have established a reputation throughout my career for strength, independence and fairness. I have the experience and intelligence to understand complicated legal issues but I also have the common sense to recognize the need for Judges, who are intelligent but not arrogant, tough but not overbearing, compassionate but not soft.

2. ***Did you receive a rating of “recommended” or higher from the state or local bar association? If not, why not?*** The Philadelphia Bar Association is still in the process of evaluating me.
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 am not an incumbent judge.
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?*** I believe that there are a number of things that can be done by the state’s judiciary to prevent discipline scandals. First, we need more transparency. The public should know when ethics violations and misconduct is committed by a member of the judiciary. Second, the discipline and penalties for judicial ethical violations should be stronger and more serious. Judges should recognize that they are being held to a higher standard and understand that the consequences for ethical violations will be severe.
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?*** There is no question that bias and prejudice continues to exist in all aspects of society and the judicial system is no exception. The diverse and wide ranging endorsements and support I received during my judicial campaign indicate that throughout my career I have maintained a reputation of fairness and impartiality. These are qualities which I will carry with me to the bench.