

Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Joseph C. Waters, Jr.**
Running for: Municipal Court Judge
Political Party: Democratic/Republican (cross endorsed)
Campaign e-mail and Website: jwaters@vnmlaw.com



Questions:

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

For fourteen years, since my admission to the bar I have practiced law and have served as an assistant professor in criminal justice at Delaware Valley College and an adjunct professor in the justice department at Philadelphia Community College. I have taught Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, The American Justice System, and Introduction to Criminal Justice, and a number of other courses. While in law school I was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to attend Exeter University in Great Britain and prepare a comparative study of the use of force by British and American police.

Prior to my admission to the bar I served in the Philadelphia Police Department rising to the rank of captain. My duties over the course of my career have included work in the patrol force and investigations. One of my assignments after achieving the rank of captain was to the internal affairs division. This assignment involved the investigation of possible misconduct on the part of police officers. The combination of my academic credentials, my police experience and my fourteen years experience in the general practice of law, I believe allows me to bring a diverse approach to a court primarily referred to as the people's court.

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

Yes.

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?

Independence is a critical aspect of being a judge. The practice and perception of judicial independence are vital to ensuring public confidence of our judicial system. This concept of independence needs to be addressed on two levels. First, a judge should act in a rational, objective and unbiased manner. Second, a judge's action should be perceived to be fair, reasonable and free of bias or prejudice. Understanding that both reality and perception are part of the evaluation process by observers, it would be my intent to address all litigants with an open mind and without preconceptions. It is my belief that all participants are entitled to a fair and unbiased opportunity to have their day in court and it would be my goal to ensure that this

occurs.

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 the best approach would be to increase the level of ethical training for all judges.

The greater the knowledge the more aware of the ethical concerns the less chance of misconduct. In addition, judges need to understand that even the appearance of impropriety can create mistrust and lack of confidence in the judiciary; this is where I believe that the ethical training is important. I would further suggest that new judges be matched up with more experienced judges as mentors, to provide informal support and guidance.

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?

The justice system has a history of arbitrary and discriminatory decisions. In the past many decisions have been made that have had a negative impact on various communities. Judicial decisions are not made in a vacuum; a decision in a particular case can have a much broader application than merely to the interest of the particular parties. Ensuring that all participants receive an equal opportunity to be heard regardless of their station in society is one of the most important tenants of the justice system. I believe that fairness and impartiality are two qualities that are necessary for any individual striving for a judicial position. In order to ensure that, I would incorporate our Supreme Court's standards for Gender, Racial and Ethnic fairness into my court practice. Furthermore, I would inform my court staff and anyone who works in my courtroom, of the standards of behavior that I expect from them. My experience and career in public service demonstrates that I understand how the public should be treated and I will exercise the good judgment necessary to help eliminate bias from my own sphere of influence within the justice system.