

Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Michael C. Shields**

Judicial post for which you are running: Judge of the Court of
Common Pleas of Montgomery County.

Political Party: Democratic

Campaign e-mail and Website: www.ShieldsforJudge2009.com



Questions

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

Since serving a judicial clerkship with a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, I have practiced law in Montgomery County for more than thirty (30) years. During my career as a Montgomery County lawyer, I have conducted a broad-based general practice and have appeared before each of the Judges of the Court. Since 1996, I have served as a Court-Appointed Discovery Master in which capacity I make recommendations to the Court concerning the disposition of civil discovery motions. A significant part of my practice also includes alternative dispute resolution, that is, the resolution of cases by arbitration or mediation after having been selected by counsel on both sides of the dispute. Many of these cases would have been decided by the Court, but were removed from the trial docket for disposition in an alternative forum.

I believe that my professional experience as well as my role as a husband, father and grandfather, and active duty military service, will contribute to my ability to serve as a fair, perceptive, even-handed and decisive jurist.

My leadership positions in the Montgomery Bar Association, including service as Chair of the Judiciary Committee, member of the Board of Directors and President of the Trial Lawyers Association, also suggest that my professional peers have confidence in my judgment and temperament, qualities which are essential to a qualified Judge.

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

I was rated “Highly Recommended” by the Montgomery Bar Association.

3. If you are 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 will recuse myself from any case in which a conflict of any nature or the appearance of conflict appears. I intend to hear and decide cases with impartiality and fairness to each party and to insure that each litigant is treated with respect and given a full opportunity to be heard. I will not become associated, as a member or otherwise, with an organization which might create even the appearance that my independence on the Bench might be affected. I have not received and will not accept a campaign contribution from any source in an amount which might suggest an influence upon my judicial independence.

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?

The Commonwealth Judiciary must be prepared to become aware of and report such misconduct. Certain of the most recent cases could not have gone unnoticed by members of the Bench and Bar. The integrity of the Judiciary and the public's perception of the fairness and character of each Judge must be paramount to any other consideration.

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?

To believe that such forms of bias do not or will not exist would be naïve. The Attorneys with whom I am running are diverse and, if elected, will bring gender, racial, ethnic and political diversity to the Bench. I pledge that such potential bias will not be tolerated in my Courtroom, not only by my conduct, but by the conduct of any member of my judicial staff.