

Inquirer Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Name: **Patricia A. McCullough**

Judicial post for which you are running: Commonwealth
Court of Pennsylvania

Campaign e-mail and website: pattmc@comcast.net

Questions

1. Why are you qualified and well-suited to serve as a judge on the court for which you are running? As a former Judge in the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny and as an attorney with more than 25 years of experience in private and corporate practice, I have extensive knowledge of many of the matters that come before the Commonwealth Court. I was a member of the Allegheny County Board of Property Assessment Appeals for four years, including one year as the chairperson, dealing not only with property tax assessment and exemption matters but the Home Rule Charter, Second Class County Code and Administrative Code. As Assistant General Counsel for the University of Pittsburgh (a state-related agency) for nine years I handled among other matters, litigation of property tax exemptions, property assessments, sales and use tax, benefits, arbitrations, various contractual matters including intellectual property, athletics, television, joint ventures with foreign entities and construction contracts. Additionally, I was an adjunct faculty member of the University. As the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, I had oversight not only of social services in the six county-wide area but also labor, regulatory, tax and other matters that come within this Court's purview. I have also been in private practice which included litigation matters, zoning, tax matters, contracts, corporate and family law. I served as a law clerk in the Court of Common Pleas of Washington County for Judge Samuel Rogers (who later served as a senior judge in the Commonwealth Court) and a law clerk in appellate division of Allegheny County Distirct Attorney's office throughout law school. As an attorney poll watcher, local and state committeewoman and treasurer of the county Republican party, I have also gained hands on experience in election and other governmental matters. I would be honored and am fully committed to serving on the Commonwealth Court which serves as the judicial "check and balance" for our state and local governement.

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

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? While serving as a judge in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas I did not take the pay raise. As to remaining independent if elected to the bench, I would not take the pay



raise and further, as I believe it is incumbent upon judicial candidates to maintain independence even throughout the campaign, I have made a commitment not to accept contributions from any special interest groups or attorneys.

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 state's judiciary could promulgate more specific rules which would enable the benchmarking of standards and may prevent some of the types of issues which have arisen recently. However, I believe it is ultimately incumbent upon each member of the judiciary to take it upon themselves, as many do, to self-regulate behavior to restore confidence in the judiciary. For this reason I did not take the pay raise and have made a commitment not to accept campaign contributions from any special interest group or 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 seeking a position on the Commonwealth Court, which is one of the state appellate courts in Pennsylvania. Since the Commonwealth Court does not conduct trials except in certain statutorily defined situations, there should not be issues of bias per se since all of the judges on the Court have taken an oath to uphold the Pennsylvania Constitution and the United States Constitution. However, as a court with original jurisdiction over claims against the Commonwealth, and appellate jurisdiction over the actions of the state's local governmental entities, the Commonwealth Court is obligated by law to redress bias and discrimination by these entities. As a woman who has been actively engaged in matters of social concern throughout my professional career, I am particularly sensitive to issues of bias and intend to be a leading and forceful advocate for the fair, equal and uniform treatment under the rule of law.