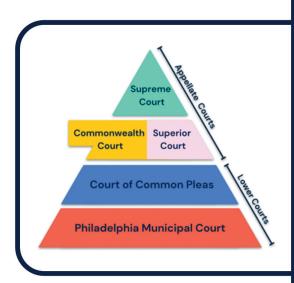


Philadelphia Judicial Elections

Everything you need to know to make an informed decision when voting for judges.



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Philadelphia Municipal Court

Responsibilities

- Determining whether serious criminal cases go to the Court of Common Pleas
- Preliminary arraignments and hearings
- Setting and accepting bail, except in murder or voluntary manslaughter cases

Court of Common Pleas

Responsibilities

- Hearing criminal and civil cases, including those involving families and children
- Hearing appeals from the minor courts and appeals not exclusively assigned to another court
- Holding civil, criminal and jury trials

Commonwealth Court

Responsibilities

- Hears civil cases involving state or local government
- Hears appeals and sometimes sits as a trial court in certain casesbrought by or against the Commonwealth, such as a constitutional challenge to a state law or a tax dispute
- The only court like it in the country

Supreme Court

Responsibilities

- The highest court in the Commonwealth and the oldest appellate court in the nation
- Known as the "court of last resort" and can assume jurisdiction over any case in the PA court system
- Seven justices serve on the Court and their job is to make the final judgment in interpreting PA's laws and Constitution

Superior Court

Responsibilities

- The appeals court for most citizens and businesses
- One of the busiest intermediate appellate courtsin the country, receiving hundreds of thousands of filings per year and deciding more than 8,000 individual cases

When we vote, we're hiring someone to do a job.

Judicial Salaries range between

\$182,346 - \$221,295

This makes the case for a voter to be well informed on the selection process, since voters pay judges salaries through taxes.

Qualifications to Look for:

- Legal experience
- Educational and professional background
- Endorsements by organizations you trust
- Community involvement and public service
- Commitment to equal justice
- Compassion, reputation for integrity and fairness
- Prior case decisions



Questions to ask Judicial Candidates

Commitment to Justice:

What are the biggest changes you think we need to make to our justice system?

Qualifications:

What qualifies you to be a judge beyond a law degree?

How long have you practiced law?

Identity:

How will you balance being an independent judge and an elected official?

How will you handle conflicts of interest on the bench?

What pro-bono and community services are you a part of and what is your role?

What clubs and associations do you belong to?

Equality:

What changes would you make to ensure equal justice for all?

In your opinion, does the court, as a whole, deal effectively with racial and gender bias? Why or why not?

What will you do to ensure equality for people of all backgrounds in your courtroom?

How Endorsements Work

TYPES OF ENDORSEMENTS

- NEWSPAPER: Usually decided by the publication's editorial board, based on a questionnaire and/or interview process.
- POLITICAL: Democratic, Green, and Republican Parties (etc.); Labor Groups (such as 32BJ, 1199C, SEIU, IBEW), and elected officials
- ADVOCACY GROUPS: Examples include National Organizations for Women, Philly for Progress, Fraternal Order of Police, can be partisan or nonpartisan, nonprofits or clubs.

For Newspaper Endorsements:

Who is on the editorial board, and how have they covered the election and related issues on the past?

For Political Endorsements:

What are the issues that are important to these groups and individuals that reflect their endorsements?

For Advocacy Group Endorsements:

What are the main policy agendas of the endorsing group and how would each office being endorsed support their efforts?

Check campaign finance records to see if there is a financial commitment from candidates before or after the endorsement.