

## Where to Find Information About Judicial Candidates

Media doesn't usually focus on Judicial races but most candidates have websites and social media accounts. Candidates use them to tell you about themselves and advertise events where you can meet them. While your ballot in these races may identify the political party of the candidate, a judge's oath requires that they shall perform their duties impartially.

Think carefully about social media posts that seem sensational or biased. The social media post could be skipping past the qualifications of a candidate to focus on something that may or may not be true, but that seems "juicy." Serious issues about a judicial candidate will generally appear in mainstream media.

Remember, an earlier decision does not reveal a judge's general viewpoint, but rather a decision made by applying the law to the facts of that particular case.

Candidate forums are great opportunities to meet and question candidates. Judicial candidates will happily attend any community meeting and meet voters. Feel free to see if a group to which you belong would invite judicial candidates to speak.

Sometimes, local bar associations rate candidates and publish the ratings. For Ohio Supreme Court candidates, the Ohio State Bar Association provides information.

Groups like the League of Women Voters or local newspapers may publish questions and answers in a non-partisan way. You may want to ask your paper to do this.

In addition, judicial candidates may be considered for endorsement by local organizations. In deciding how to vote, you can inquire into the endorsement process.

Ohio's judges are elected by you, and like all elected officials, they can make a difference in the life of your community. Judges are a crucial link in our system of government.

The Ohio Supreme Court and all judges in the 88 counties of Ohio want you to be informed and engaged in choosing judges. Please consider the information in this pamphlet and feel free to do your own research on the candidates in your area.

Remember to vote all the way through the ballot to the judges, often the last races listed!

Other websites:

[www.judicialvotescount.com](http://www.judicialvotescount.com)  
[www.judge4yourself.com](http://www.judge4yourself.com)  
[www.ohiobar.org](http://www.ohiobar.org)  
[my.lvv.org/ohio](http://my.lvv.org/ohio)

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**AND THIS ELECTION...  
CAST AN INFORMED  
VOTE TO HELP CHOOSE  
YOUR JUDGES.**

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**ELECTING JUDGES**

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**A CITIZENS GUIDE**

## Citizens Elect all Judges in Ohio

Ohio Supreme Court Justices are elected by all Ohio voters. Voters in Districts set by the Legislature elect Courts of Appeals Judges. Judges at these two levels hear appeals from lower level courts. In these races only, your ballot will identify the political party of the candidate.

Trial court judges serve in common pleas, municipal, and county courts. Common Pleas Court Judges are elected by everyone in the county; they may be General Division Judges handling every kind of case (felony criminal cases and civil cases worth more than \$25,000) or specialized judges in Juvenile, Domestic Relations or Probate Court, or some combination (it varies from county to county). Municipal and County Court Judges handle traffic cases, misdemeanor criminal cases, and civil cases worth less than \$25,000.

## Voters Should Vote in Judicial Races

Even though judges make decisions that can affect your daily life, about one third of voters don't vote through the ballot to vote on judges. When asked why, most say it's because they don't know much about judges.

This pamphlet gives you suggestions on how to learn more, so you can make informed choices in all the races on your ballot. Use this pamphlet to get some understanding of that process and the limitations placed on judges, but not other candidates for office.

## Judicial Candidates are Different

Most candidates for election run by advocating their views and promising to act on those views. Judicial candidates campaign, but their speech is limited. They can present their record of public service, relevant experience and qualifications. They can discuss general views on the administration of justice including court procedures and should listen to your concerns.

But, Judicial candidates **CANNOT** promise how they would act in particular cases or on certain issues. Why? Because judges must approach each case individually and apply the law to that case impartially. Impartially means that judges cannot make decisions based upon personal or political viewpoints or experiences.

The rules that judges and judicial candidates must follow prohibit:

- Comment on substantive matters relating to a specific case pending in any court.
- Any statement that could affect the outcome or impair the fairness of any case in any court.
- Any pledge, promise or commitment inconsistent with the **impartial** performance of judicial duties in regard to any case, controversy or issue likely to come before the court.

The job of a judge is to consider each case carefully and objectively. You should vote for candidates you believe will make important and complicated decisions fairly and independently.

Judges are not elected to represent partisan views. However, candidates may use party and other endorsements throughout a campaign. Endorsements may shine a light on a judicial philosophy, but do not mean that a judge is promising to act in a certain way.



## Judicial Campaigns

Judicial campaigns are carefully regulated and closely watched. The Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct requires candidates to follow a multitude of general and specific rules enforced by the Ohio Supreme Court.

Judicial candidates can be disciplined for making statements of partiality or for behavior that violates the Code, including acts not personally performed by the candidate but on his or her behalf.

Judicial campaigns raise funds to use in getting out the candidate's message. However, again, there are specific limits on amounts and methods unique to judicial races.

There are minimum qualifications for a candidate including a law degree, passage of the Ohio bar exam, and six years of experience as a lawyer.

## Questions You Should Consider

Legal experience: How long has the candidate practiced law and in what types of cases? Does he or she have experience in the Court for which they are running?

Community involvement: Is the candidate involved in community affairs? Does she or he have experience in your community? What has the candidate accomplished outside of the law?

Judicial philosophy: How does he or she view the judge's role in sentencing criminals? Does the candidate expect to look at the Court administration, and if so, what would she or he like to change? What obstacles does the candidate identify in achieving justice in our system?

Character: Does the candidate respond to your questions? Does he or she have the temperament and intelligence to be fair and impartial in difficult or publicity heavy cases?

**AND MOST IMPORTANTLY:** If this candidate were to be your judge in a case involving you, would the judge be fair?