

THE ERIE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION
JUDICIAL COMMITTEE
2019 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

Candidate's Name: Erin Colleen Connelly

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1. Why are you seeking the position of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas?

The courtroom should be a place where people of all economic and social statuses have the opportunity to seek justice. At minimum it is a place where those who feel they don't have a voice can finally be heard whether firsthand or through legal representation. I have a strong belief in the court system as well as protecting the rights of all individuals. When the right person is elected to this position we are doing our entire community and legal system a justice in itself.

I have focused my career on helping people navigate the court system while finding a level of comfort and security in the system. I am seeking this position to further my career in public service and continue to have an impact on the safety, equality, and well-being of the citizens of Erie County.

2. Being careful to maintain client confidentiality as embodied in the Rule 1.6 of the Rules of Professional Conduct, describe the general character of your law practice, including areas of concentration and the most significant achievements of your legal career. Explain how your practice has prepared you for the position of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

I have served as a prosecutor in the District Attorney's Office for over 16 years, having practiced every aspect of Criminal Law. I have prosecuted thousands of cases with a specialization in domestic violence and sexual assault. To date I have prosecuted 26 murder cases, 18 of those cases have been jury trials.

My career has provided me with so many opportunities to give support as well as a sense of closure and justice. It is a rewarding position and I have many significant achievements. Along with my homicide prosecutions, I have helped sexual assault victim's find their voice in the courtroom. I created a policy to streamline violations of Protection from Abuse Orders through the system; simplifying the process for victims and police officers.

In 2014 I came across a violent rape case that was over 15 years old. Upon learning the defendant had fled and therefore was never prosecuted for his actions, I pulled the file and began doing research on the case. I learned the victim was deceased and felt strongly that despite her death she deserved justice. After research, briefs, and arguments I was able to get the case before a jury and fight successfully for a conviction.

My job as a prosecutor has prepared me for the position of Judge in many ways. I have spent almost every day in the courtroom, working with people from various backgrounds. I have experience with courtroom procedure, evidence, researching and writing appeals. I make decisions that impact the safety and security of businesses and individuals of Erie County while taking into account the needs of the defendant. My job requires me to look at the bigger picture and the best interest for all parties involved.

3. With respect to the last ten years:

a) Did you appear in court regularly, occasionally, or not at all? If the frequency of your appearances in court has varied during this period, describe each such variance, giving the dates thereof:

I have appeared in court regularly (3-5 days a week) for the last 16 years.

b) What percentage of these appearances was in:

1. Federal courts: 0%

2. State courts of record: 100%

3. Other courts: Magisterial District Courts

c) What percentage of your litigation was:

1. Civil: 0%

2. Criminal: 100%

d) State the number of cases in courts of record you tried to verdict or judgment (rather than settled), indicating whether you were sole counsel, chief counsel or associate counsel:

I have tried approximately 160 cases to verdict. I have been lead or co-counsel on 15 homicide trials and served as second chair on three homicide trials early in my career. The remainder of these cases I have served as sole counsel. In addition, as a supervisor, I have assisted new Assistant District Attorneys with trials.

e) What percentage of these trials were:

1. Jury: 90%

2. Non-jury: 10%

f) Describe other areas of practice:

I have served as both an arbitrator and chairperson on civil, contract, and personal injury arbitration panels.

4. Have you ever been convicted of any misdemeanor or felony, court-martialed, been granted immunity from prosecution, or been the subject of a protection from abuse final order? If so, give details.

No.

5. Have you ever been the subject of formal discipline for a breach of professional ethics or unprofessional conduct?

No.

6. Have you ever been found liable for legal malpractice?

No.

7. In the last 10 years:

a) has a tax lien or other collection proceeding ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? Yes.

b) has a judgment been entered against you? No.

c) have you ever filed personal bankruptcy? No.

If so, give details. American Express Account debt was settled and paid in full.

8. Do you have experience with ADR? If so, give details.

No.

9. Which judges or justices do you most admire and why?

I admire many of the Court of Common Pleas Judges I have practiced in front of throughout the past 16 years for different reasons. The Judge I admire most is my father, Judge Shad Connelly. I have the ultimate respect for him not just as a father, but as a Judge. His work ethic and reputation among the Bar Association are truly impressive. It is a rare day that I do not hear a compliment about his manner, efficiency or temperament from a fellow attorney or court employee. He ensures people have an opportunity to be heard, makes fairness and respect a priority, and makes decisions based on the facts. He holds everyone to the same high standard he holds himself. My father demands respect for the courtroom and gives the same in return.

10. If a substantial period of your practice has been before administrative boards, commissions or agencies during the past five years, identify the boards, commissions or agencies before which you have practiced and estimate percentages of practice time devoted thereto:

No.

11. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business or profession other than the practice of law or the holding of judicial or other public office? If so, give details, including dates:

I taught a course titled "Issues in Criminal Justice" as an Adjunct Professor at Mercyhurst University in Fall of 2015.

12. Describe your involvement in community activities.

Coaching Mercyhurst University's Mock Trial Team

Protection from Abuse Coordinated Services Board Member

Books for Kids (reading to kids in inner city schools)

Volunteer work for various charity fundraisers

McDowell Girls Soccer Team fundraising/ volunteer work

13. What do you consider a significant achievement in your life outside your profession? Describe it.

I have many significant accomplishments thus far but what sticks out to me most is being looked up to as a role model by young women.

14. Do any circumstances exist that would affect your ability to perform the function of the position you seek or fulfill the term of office? If so, please explain:

No.

15. Describe your involvement in Erie County Bar Association activities.

Wills for Heroes (2014, 2015, 2017 & 2019)

Mentor in AKT Program (2004- present)

Mock Trial (2014- present)

- served as Chairperson (2017-2018)
- Attorney Coach for various schools
- also served as a timekeeper, juror and Judge

16. How do you view the current relationship between the Bench and the Bar of Erie County? Do you think it can be improved? What would you do to maintain or improve relations between the Bench and the Bar if elected to the position of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas?

I believe the Bench and Bar have a good relationship. I have participated with both Federal and Court of Common Pleas Judges in the activities described above and have observed the Judges engage with members of the Bar. If elected I would foster this relationship by continuing to participate in AKT and Mock Trial along with any other committees that would help to continue my legal growth. I would also continue to get to know the attorneys in the Bar Association. Additionally, I feel it is beneficial and important to encourage new attorneys to get involved in the Bar Association programs and activities as I do with young attorneys in my office. Leading by example has always proved to be an excellent start to engagement.

s17. Do you believe it is important for a Judge to remain involved in Erie County Bar Association activities? Please explain:

Yes, the Bar Association has a lot to offer the community. I think anyone in an elected position should continue to do what they can in order to further advance their relationship and trust within the community.

18. What do you envision to be your continuing role with the Erie County Bar Association should you be elected? Would you attend substantive and social gatherings of that Bar Association?

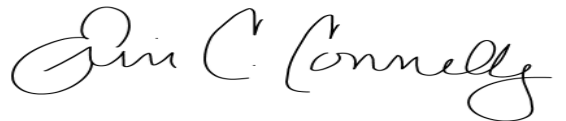
As stated above I would continue to participate in the programs I have participated in throughout the years. I would also continue to attend gatherings in order to familiarize myself with attorneys and make them feel comfortable in my presence. In addition to, I would participate in anything that would expand my legal knowledge.

19. Are there any other matters, not covered in these questions, which you consider relevant to members of the Erie County Bar Association and to voters evaluating your fitness for the judiciary? If so, describe

I feel the Bar and voters should know my background in the courtroom, ability to work with other attorneys and members of the community. Each day I make decisions that impact the citizens of Erie County. My job is never about one person, I take into account all parties involved and come up with a resolution that is in the best interest for everyone. In my practice justice is not always about a conviction. In addition to my caseload, as Chief Deputy District Attorney, I supervise 13 Assistant District Attorneys.

Erin Colleen Connelly

Printed Name



Candidate's Signature

March 10, 2019

Date