

ERIE JUDICIAL CANDIDATES RATED BY ATTORNEYS

The Erie County Bar Association (ECBA) recently polled its 439 Active members to determine how they would rate this year's judicial candidates. The ECBA conducts judicial candidate ratings because it feels the public would like to know how fellow lawyers, who work more closely with the candidates than anyone else, would rate their qualifications to be judge.

In the poll, ECBA members were asked to evaluate and provide an overall rating for each candidate based upon the totality of his or her professional qualifications including competence, integrity, temperament, and experience.

An overall rating of “*Highly Recommended*” indicates the candidate possesses the *highest* level of competence, integrity, temperament, and experience and would be capable of outstanding performance as a judge. A “*Recommended*” rating indicates the candidate possesses an *adequate* level of competence, integrity, temperament, and experience and would be capable of satisfactory performance as a judge. A “*Not Recommended*” rating indicates that at this time the candidate does *not* possess the level of competence, integrity, temperament or experience, or any combination thereof, to be capable of satisfactory performance as a judge. If voting members do not know a candidate well enough to evaluate them, they are asked to indicate “*No Opinion*.”

For a candidate to receive a rating of “Highly Recommended,” more than 50% of the membership returning ballots must rate a candidate as “Highly Recommended.” For a candidate to receive a rating of “Recommended,” more than 50% of the membership returning ballots must rate the candidate as “Recommended. When determining whether a candidate is “Recommended” by more than 50% of the membership returning ballots, votes received in the categories of “Highly Recommended” and “Recommended” are combined. For a candidate to receive a rating of “Not Recommended,” more than 50% of the membership returning ballots must rate the candidate as “Not Recommended.” Where more than 50% of the membership does not rate the candidate as “Highly Recommended,” “Recommended” or “Not Recommended,” the candidate received no rating. The results are shown below.

OVERALL RATING

Candidate	Overall Rating	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended	No Opinion
Ridge	Highly Recommended	227 (82%)	47 (17%)	1 (< 1%)	3 (1%)
Smith	Highly Recommended	161 (58%)	77 (28%)	22 (8%)	18 (6%)
Sala	Recommended	41 (15%)	138 (50%)	49 (18%)	50 (18%)
Sinnott	Not Recommended	22 (8%)	67 (24%)	155 (56%)	34 (12%)

Candidate	Overall Rating	Highly Recommended	Recommended	Not Recommended	No Opinion
Connelly	No Rating	35 (13%)	98 (35%)	106 (38%)	39 (14%)

In the same poll, ECBA members were asked to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 5 representing “strongly agree”) each candidate’s competence, integrity, temperament, and experience. As such, the more strongly a member agreed that the candidate possesses such a quality, the higher the score. The more strongly that a member disagreed that the candidate possesses such a quality, the lower the score. “Competence” is defined as intellectual capability, judgment, legal writing and analytical ability, industry, knowledge of the law, scholarship and academic talent, and professional contributions. “Integrity” is defined as good moral character, ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. “Temperament” is defined as compassion, decisiveness, open-mindedness, sensitivity, courtesy, patience, freedom from bias, and commitment to justice. “Experience” is defined as years in practice, diversity of legal experience, trial experience, work with administrative agencies and arbitration boards, teaching, and public service. The results are shown below.

COMPETENCE

Candidate	Average Score	No Opinion
Ridge	4.7	7 (2.51%)
Smith	4.4	15 (5.40%)
Sala	3.7	46 (16.54%)
Connelly	3.3	38 (13.67%)
Sinnott	2.8	26 (9.34%)

INTEGRITY

Candidate	Average Score	No Opinion
Ridge	4.7	10 (3.59%)
Smith	4.5	18 (6.46%)
Sala	4.1	47 (16.90%)
Connelly	3.7	42 (15.11%)
Sinnott	3.5	30 (10.80%)

TEMPERAMENT

Candidate	Average Score	No Opinion
Ridge	4.6	8 (2.87%)
Smith	4.4	15 (5.39%)
Sala	3.9	46 (16.53%)
Sinnott	3.4	30 (10.80%)
Connelly	3.0	44 (15.82%)

EXPERIENCE

Candidate	Average Score	No Opinion
Ridge	4.7	8 (2.87%)
Smith	4.2	15 (5.39%)
Sala	3.6	46 (16.54%)
Connelly	2.9	35 (12.59%)
Sinnott	2.3	24 (8.63%)

There were 439 ballots issued and 278 valid ballots returned, or a participation rate of 63%. The percentages and average scores above are based upon the total valid ballots received, not the total number of Active members. The ballots were tallied by Maloney, Reed, Scarpitti & Company, LLP, Certified Public Accountants.

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