



**JUDICIAL COMMITTEE**

**2023 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUDICIAL CANDIDATES**

Candidate's Name: Leigh Ann Orton  
Office Address: 68 East Main Street  
North East, PA 16428  
Phone Number: (814) 347-5724  
Email: lorton@ortonandorton.com

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

I want to put my life and work experience to use serving the citizenry of Erie County. The people expect and should receive justice with dignity and respect in the courtroom, regardless of economic, social or political status. I believe that I have the temperament, knowledge and patience perform the duties and handle the responsibilities of required of the position.

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.

My practice concentrates on family law, estate planning and administration, elder law and real estate. In the area of family law, my practice has focused on matters involving child custody, child support, spousal support, alimony, divorce, prenuptial agreements, marital settlement agreements and Protection From Abuse Orders. I am also collaboratively trained in family law matters.

I have made many significant achievements in my 25 years of practicing law. Some of my most successful accomplishments are:

- Successfully litigated and received a favorable ruling in a complex custody case involving relocation and choice of school district
- Successfully litigated and received favorable rulings in numerous custody, child support and divorce cases
- Successfully litigated and received a favorable ruling in a complex custody case involving relocation in Crawford County

- Collaboratively trained in family law matters
- Successfully obtained a favorable ruling from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue regarding a Medicaid Estate Recovery matter which resulted in my clients receiving a substantial amount of money that they would not have otherwise received.
- Editor of “Medicare Advantage...or Disadvantage” by Emily E. Town, 4<sup>th</sup> place winner of 2010 NAELA Student Writing Competition
- Selected as the People’s Choice “Best Attorney” for the years 2012, 2013, 2017, 2018 and 2020 and selected as the People’s Choice “Best Law Firm” for 2019, *North East News Journal*
- Authored numerous articles regarding long term care estate planning published in the *North East News Journal*
- Presented to the Bar and others on a number of topics including divorce and estate planning, long term care planning, Medicaid planning and asset preservation to other professionals and potential clients

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 appeared in family court on a regular basis over the last ten years.

b) What percentage of these appearances was in:

1. Federal Courts: 0%
2. State courts of record: 100%
3. Other courts: 0%

c) What percentage of your litigation was:

1. Civil: 100%
2. Criminal: 0%

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 numerous cases in the Court of Common Pleas to judgment.

e) What percentage of these trials were:

1. Jury: 0%
2. Non-jury: 100%

f) Describe other areas of practice:

I have assisted numerous clients in simple and complex estate planning and elder law matters, including wills, trusts, long term care planning, Medicaid planning and asset preservation. I have also administered numerous estates in the Orphan’s Court. I have conducted hundreds if not thousands real estate transactions over the past 25 years,

involving residential and commercial properties. I am collaboratively trained in family law matters and represented a client in a collaborative divorce.

4. If a good amount 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.

0%

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

I am trained in collaborative practice and have represented a client in a collaborative divorce. I have also served on an arbitration panel and been selected for several others, although they settled.

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

It would be inappropriate for me to comment on any sitting judges. I admire Judge Fred Anthony for the dignity and respect for which he treated those that appeared before him, attorneys and clients alike.

7. 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 obtained my real estate license as an Associate Broker in approximately 2006 or 2007 and worked briefly as a licensed real estate agent until 2009.

8. Describe your involvement in community activities.

I am an active member of Park United Methodist Church. I am a former board member and past President of the board of Community Nursing Services of North East and a former board member of the Junior League of Erie. I am a former steering committee member of the North East Business Women's Roundtable and past Assistant Troop Leader of Girl Scout Troop #36009. I am a member of the Order of the Eastern Star, Shiloh Chapter No. 153, and former member of the National and Pennsylvania Associations of Realtors and Greater Erie Board of Realtors. I have also participated in community activities to raise money for the treatment and cure of breast cancer, which is very important to me, being a breast cancer survivor.

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

I consider my marriage to my husband, Chris, and our three children, Madeline, Mallick and Max, to be my greatest achievement. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2016. Battling and conquering breast cancer was a significant achievement in my life which I would not have been able to accomplish without the support, love and encouragement of my family, friends and colleagues in the Bar.

10. Do any circumstances exist that would adversely affect your ability to perform the function of a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas or be able to fulfill your term of office? If so, please explain:

No.

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

I am actively involved in the Erie County Bar Association. I am a past chair of the Family Law and Estates and Trusts sections and actively participate in the family law Bar. I served on the fee dispute resolution committee. I have attended Bench Bar Conferences and found them to be fun and entertaining as well as an excellent opportunity to get to know fellow members of the Bar in a casual setting. I have also participated and continue to participate in various other Bar sponsored events and continuing legal education seminars.

12. 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 have attended the past few Bench Bar Conferences and believe them to be a great venue for judges and Bar association members to get to know one another outside of the formality of the courtroom. I view the current relationship between the Bench and the Bar to be good.

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

Judges should also remain involved with the Bar to further the Bar Association's mission of supporting the public's understanding of and respect for the judicial system.

14. 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?

I would attend substantive and social gatherings of the Bar Association as much as possible. I believe it is important for judges and the Bar to communicate and work together to improve the judicial system.

15. 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.

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

No.

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

No.

18. In the past 10 years:

a) has a tax lien or other collection proceeding ever been instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? No.

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

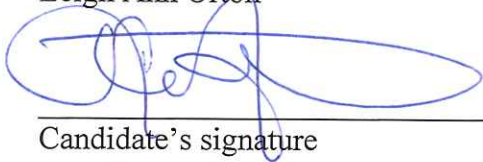
c) have you filed personal bankruptcy? No.

If you answer yes to any of these questions, give details.

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

Practicing family law for the past 25 years, including representing clients in child custody cases, child support matters, divorces, adoptions, preparation of premarital and postnuptial agreements and other related matters, has given me the experience needed to preside over these matters beginning on day one. I graduated near the top of my law school class, received the American Jurisprudence and Corpus Juris Secundum awards for excelling above the rest of my law school class in Criminal Law and I am ready to put my knowledge and experience to work for the Erie County judicial system. It is important for a judge to be well rounded in the law, even tempered, fair and to display the highest ethical and moral standards. I am ready to bring those qualities to the bench.

Leigh Ann Orton



\_\_\_\_\_  
Candidate's signature

2/22/23

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date