

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO  
QUESTIONS FOR JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

**What questions can we ask judicial candidates, and what questions are not allowed?**

The Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 4, spells out rules for permissible and prohibited conduct by candidates for judge.

A judicial candidate may not:

- Make speeches on behalf of a political party or act as a leader of a political party.
- Publicly endorse or oppose a candidate for another public office.
- Comment on any substantive matter relating to a specific case pending on the docket of any judge.
- Make any statement that would reasonably be expected to affect the outcome or impair the fairness of a matter pending or impending in any court.
- In connection with cases, controversies, or issues that are likely to come before the court, make pledges, promises, or commitments that are inconsistent with the *impartial* performance of the adjudicative duties of judicial office.

**Why are there rules limiting what candidates for judge may say?**

The “2013 Judicial Candidate Handbook” published by the Supreme Court of Ohio has the answer:

Though subject to public election, a judge plays a role different from that of a legislator or executive branch official. Rather than making decisions based upon the expressed views or preferences of the electorate, a judge makes decisions based upon the law and the facts of each case. Therefore, in furtherance of this interest, judges and judicial candidates must, to the greatest extent possible, be free and appear to be free from political influence and political pressure.

**With these rules in mind, LWV Ohio offers the following sample questions for judicial candidates.**

**Questions about running for this particular court:**

1. For voters who may be unfamiliar, describe the court you are running for. What does that court do? What does a judge on that court do? What makes you qualified to do it?
2. To what extent have you practiced in the area(s) of law this court handles?
3. Describe a case that you handled of which you are particularly proud. Explain why.
4. Ohio lawyers are encouraged to provide Pro Bono Legal Services. Have you provided such services? If so, please describe the types of matters handled and how much time you have devoted to this work in the past three years.

**Questions about the candidate’s legal experience:**

5. What work or other experience have you had that will particularly qualify you to perform the duties of a judge on this court?

6. As a prospective judge, what do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?
7. Estimate the number of cases that you have tried and please describe the different types of cases you have tried.
8. Describe the general nature of your legal practice during the past ten years.
9. During the past ten years what percentage of your time has been spent arguing cases in court, including matters before administrative agencies?

**Questions about the candidate's legal/political philosophy:**

10. Do you believe that all citizens have adequate access to legal help and the legal system? If not, what can be done to provide wider and more meaningful access?
11. What do you perceive as the greatest obstacle to justice, if any?
12. To what extent do you believe that a judge should or should not defer to actions of a legislature?
13. How do you believe that we can assure that judges are independent of special interests?
14. What do you believe are the causes of the high rates of minority incarceration? Anything the courts can do to address the issue?
15. What are your views as to whether the court as a whole deals effectively with racial, ethnic, and gender bias?
16. What have been the most effective methods for improving court procedures and efficiency? What other methods would you suggest?
17. What changes, if any, would you make if elected to the Bench?
18. What do you consider the greatest issue that the judiciary in Ohio faces today?
19. Do you have any suggestions as to any changes we might make in the way Ohioans select their judges?
20. What do you think could be done to better educate Ohioans about the role of the judiciary? If you are elected judge, what role do you envision playing in educating Ohioans about the role of the judiciary?
21. How would you maintain your impartiality and avoid undue influence in the performance of your judicial responsibilities? Discuss campaign contributions and third party electioneering
22. Describe what you believe to be the appropriate role of the courts in our political process, particularly from the standpoint of the court's role and authority as a co-equal branch of government.

**Questions about the candidate's temperament:**

23. How do you deal with difficult people, including peers, lawyers, clients or litigants?
24. Please describe one instance in which you faced an ethical dilemma and how you handled it.
25. What qualities most impressed you in the judges before whom you have appeared? Describe which of these qualities you possess.
26. Describe your community involvement.
27. Describe what you believe constitutes a good judicial temperament and describe why you feel you possess those qualities.