

**THE ERIE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
JUDICIAL COMMITTEE**

**2015 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?

I am seeking this position to continue a career of public service in the courtroom.

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 has been in the area of Criminal Law as an Assistant District Attorney for the past 11 ½ years. I have been involved in every aspect of the Criminal Justice system from investigations to prosecuting cases. I am knowledgeable in all areas of criminal law but specialize in the areas of domestic violence and sexual assault.

While it is difficult to determine which achievements throughout my career are the most significant, I will detail the moments that particularly stand out:

- Providing a sense of closure and justice to families who have lost loved ones to a violent crime
- Creating a policy streamlining the process for a plaintiff to file criminal charges for violations of their Protection from Abuse orders; simplifying the process for the victims while saving police officers time
- Preparing, researching and successfully renewing the prosecution of a 15 year old violent rape case where the defendant was a fugitive and the victim was deceased

My job as a Prosecutor has prepared me for the position of Judge in many ways. It has provided me with the opportunity to spend the majority of my time in the courtroom. I have observed and participated in all aspects of criminal law and in doing so I have gained invaluable courtroom experience. I know how the courtroom operates, how and when to use discretion, when to be tough, and when justice requires compassion. Additionally, I have worked with a diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds.

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.

b) What percentage of these appearances was in:

1. Federal courts: 0%

2. State courts of record: 100%

3. Other 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 over 120 cases. Of those cases I co-counseled approximately eight and was the sole prosecutor on the rest.

e) What percentage of these trials were:

1. Jury: approximately 90%

2. Non-jury: approximately 10%

f) Describe other areas of practice:

I have participated on arbitration panels in civil cases.

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.

I had an American Express collection proceeding, payment arrangements were made and debt was paid off.

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

No.

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

Outside of my father, of course, who I am precluded by law from practicing in front of, I admire President Judge Ernest DiSantis Jr. for many reasons. He is certainly the type of judge and person that I aspire to be. I have known him my entire life and practiced in front of him for over 11 years. I've always felt that he treated every individual with respect, compassion and fairness whether a convicted murderer or a child victim. He is efficient, concise and extremely knowledgeable.

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:

N/A

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:

N/A

12. Describe your involvement in community activities.

- Coaching Mercyhurst University's mock trial team
- PFACS (Protection from Abuse Coordinated Services) board member
- Books for Kids (reading to children at Wayne Elementary monthly)
- Fundraising for Safenet and Therapy Dogs
- Volunteering for various Cystic Fibrosis fundraisers
- Member of SART (Sexual Assault Response Team)
- Stop Violence Against Women grant program committee member
- Organized the Chinese Auction for Wounded Warriors Project Memorial Golf Tournament

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

Pushing myself physically and mentally to train for and complete a half marathon.

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.

- Participated in Wills for Heroes (2014)
- Mentor in AKT Program (2004 - present)
- Mock Trial (2010 - present)
  - Organized and coached Strong Vincent High School's first mock trial team
  - Attorney coach for Fort LeBoeuf
  - Also participated as a juror, baliff, timekeeper 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 view the current relationship between the Bench and the Bar as a distant one. Younger judges on the Bench who have already involved themselves in Bar Association programs would help to improve this relationship. If elected I would continue to participate in AKT, mock trials and any other committees that would help to improve my knowledge in the areas of the court in which I am assigned. Additionally, I feel it is beneficial to encourage new attorneys to involve themselves in the Bar Association programs and activities. It is certainly important to lead by example.

17. 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 foster their relationship with both the Bar and the community itself.

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 my legal career. I would continue to attend gatherings in order to familiarize myself with attorneys as well as 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.

- Received award from Crime Victim Center for reducing the impact of crime in the community (2004)
- Strong Vincent Alumni Award (2012)

Erin Colleen Connelly  
Printed Name

Erin C. Connelly  
Candidate's signature

Date

2-3-15