

THE ERIE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

2015 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

Candidate's Name: Joe Walsh

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1. **Why are you seeking the position of Judge of the Common Pleas Court?** I am seeking the position of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas because I would like to put my 30 + years of legal training and experience to work for the citizens of Erie County. I recognize the tremendous responsibility involved with the position, and believe that I have the qualifications necessary to be a fair, compassionate, and decisive judge.
2. **Being careful to maintain client confidentiality as embodied in the Rules 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 would describe my practice as very broad based. I have handled cases from A-Z and just about everything in between. I have tried homicide cases, civil cases, probate cases, misdemeanor and felony cases, as well as domestic cases.

Areas of concentration over the course of my career include criminal, family law, real estate, estates and mental health law.

I am proud of that fact that I brought Collaborative Law to Erie County. After I was trained in 2007, I am happy to say that our local group now has more than 40 members trained to help people resolve their issues in a more respectful manner.

I also take great pride in the fact that I have presided over 5,500 mental health hearings since 1991, with no decisions appealed!

Experience in virtually every area of the law has prepared me for the position of Judge on the Court of Common Pleas.

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 such variance, giving the dates thereof: I have appeared in court regularly\_

(b) **what percentage of these appearances as in:**

1-3. All court appearances have been in state courts of record

(c) **What percentage of your litigation was:** civil litigation 90% ; criminal litigation 10%

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

Over the course of my career, I have tried approximately 50 cases to verdict or judgment in 4 different counties

(e) **What percentage of these trials were:** Jury trials – 75%; **Non-jury trials** - 25%

(f) **Describe other areas of practice:** Real estate, estates, mental health, business, oil and gas, municipal and unemployment compensation.

1. **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 the details.** No / None.
2. **Have you ever been the subject of formal discipline for a breach of professional ethics or unprofessional conduct?** No
3. **Have you ever been found liable for malpractice?** No.
4. **In the last ten 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 ever filed personal bankruptcy?** No

5. **Do you have experience with ADR? If so, give details.** I have been trained in Collaborative Law since 2007.

6. **Which judges or justices do you most admire and why?** I admire Judge Connelly as he always let you try your case and his rulings were almost always as I would have expected.

Judge DiSantis was always very prepared, professional, and had a great temperament.

7. **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

8. **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

9. **Described your involvement in community activities.** I have served as Vice-President of the St. Boniface School Board; served on the Finance Committee for St. Boniface Church; served as an assistant little league coach; served as an assistant grade school basketball coach; served as an Advisory Board Member and Governing Board Member for Safe Harbor Behavioral Health; Rotary Presenter at the Ethics Symposium at Mercyhurst University; Erie Rotary Club Member and Northwest Pennsylvania Inns of Court.

10. **What do you consider a significant achievement in your life outside your profession? Describe it.** I consider enlisting in the United States Navy, and volunteering for nuclear submarine duty, in service to our country as a significant life achievement outside of my profession.
11. **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:** None exist.
12. **Describe your involvement in Erie County Bar Association Activities.** I have been a member of the Erie County Bar Association since 1986, and have been a member of the family law, real estate, scholarship, estates and trust, Stepping Out and fee dispute committees. I have also served as a legal aid volunteer attorney.
13. **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 current relationship between the bench and the bar of Erie County is "fair" at best. The relationship can definitely be improved. I would actively support the bar functions, and would strongly encourage fellow judges to do the same. I would support open and frank discussions in order to improve the working relationship between the bench and the bar, to best serve everyone's interests.
14. **Do you believe it is important for a Judge to remain involved in Erie County Bar Association activities? Please explain:** I believe it is important for a judge to remain involved in the Erie County Bar Association activities. Judges sometimes need to be reminded where they came from. By staying involved, I believe they stay connected with the bar which hopefully helps them stay grounded.
15. **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?** Should I be fortunate enough to get elected, I would envision my role with the Erie County Bar Association to continue as an active member, serving on committees that would foster a good working relationship between the bench and the bar. I would continue to attend and support substantive and social gatherings of the bar association.
16. **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.** Quoting Chief Justice Roberts: "Judges are like umpires. Umpires don't make the rules. They apply them. The role of an umpire and a judge is critical. They make sure everybody plays by the rules. But it is a limited role. Nobody ever went to a ballgame to see the umpire."



JOE WALSH

2/1/15