



FOX CHAPEL DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE 2025 JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

As you know, there are a large number of candidates for an unusually high number of judicial vacancies within the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas in 2025. The Fox Chapel Democratic Committee (FCDC) believes that citizens of Fox Chapel and those of surrounding communities as well voters within Allegheny County in general would benefit from learning more about the candidates, so that their choices in upcoming elections can be as informed as possible. Therefore, FCDC has developed a Judicial Candidate Questionnaire and is asking each judicial candidate to complete and return it, so that your responses can be distributed as widely as possible.

FCDC intends to:

- Share your responses with Democratic committees of other communities in our region;
- Share your responses with the citizens of Fox Chapel and to individuals within Fox Chapel School District, and encourage other area committees to do so;
- Publish your responses on FCDC's website and seek to have them published on the Allegheny County Democratic Committee's website as well;
- Publish them on FCDC's social media pages.

PART 2: INSTRUCTIONS

Please respond to the questions on the following page and return your written responses to *foxchapedems@gmail.com* on or before **Friday, February 14, 2025**.

This form is in Word format, so responses may be typed directly under each question.

Please answer each question, including subparts, as completely as possible; however, please keep responses clear and reasonably concise so they are understandable and useful to individuals who may not have a background in law.

QUESTIONNAIRE

CANDIDATE NAME: Quita Bridges

DATE: 2/14/25

1. Judicial Philosophy and Temperament

Judges make decisions in high-stakes and emotional situations. How do you stay fair and calm under pressure? Share an example from your career.

I stay calm under pressure by grounding myself in the law and facts. I focus on legal principles and evidence, not emotions or external pressures. I always maintain an objective mindset.

An example of when I was under pressure was during a homicide trial and the judge was having a bad week personally. He took his anger out on me, the eye witness and the jury. During the trial, he yelled at the jury because someone asked a question to the court staff and the judge had instructed the jury not to talk about the case. The eye witness did not answer questions the way the judge liked so he threatened to put the witness in the bullpen where they keep prisoners. The judge rushed me throughout the whole trial. This was a very stressful 4 days but I maintained my professionalism. I took pauses before responding and I maintained a neutral tone and demeanor.

2. Commitment to Judicial Ethics

Judges must avoid conflicts of interest and undue influence. How would you handle a situation where a friend or campaign donor asks for special treatment in your courtroom?

I would politely but firmly refuse any request for favoritism. I would make it clear that my duty is to apply the law fairly and that personal relationships do not influence decisions. I would also consider recusing myself if there is a financial or personal interest that could affect my impartiality.

- a. Have you had this experience, and what was your response?

I have never had that experience.

- b. Did you disclose it to an ethics body or to law enforcement? Why or why not?

3. Accessibility and Fairness

a. Judges must ensure everyone can participate in the legal process. How will you make your courtroom accessible to people without lawyers?

I would make sure the court staff is trained to direct those that are self-represented to self help resources but not give legal advice. I would also have written materials on what to expect in court. It is also important to exercise patients and be respectful. I would ensure that the playing field is level by not allowing opposing counsel to take advantage of someone because of their lack of legal knowledge.

The courtroom has to be ADA compliant and if possible I would allow virtual appearance where appropriate. I would also allow time to obtain court interpreters for those with limited English proficiency.

b. Every person has conscious and/or unconscious biases. How do you recognize and suppress those biases in yourself, so that you can deal with all parties fairly and dispassionately? Give examples of how you've dealt with this issue.

Recognizing and suppressing unconscious biases is critical for ensuring fairness and impartiality. I would first acknowledge that bias exists.. Accepting this reality allows you to be more self-aware and proactive in mitigating bias. I would also reflect on my gut reaction to different litigants, attorneys and cases. I think it is important to pause and examine my reasoning before making a decision.

4. Describe the types of cases you've tried/presided over

List 3-5 examples of cases (anonymously) in which you've been involved as counsel or judge, and that you believe inform or enhance your ability to serve as a judge. Include why/how these experiences influenced you.

Case 1 - JS was the stepfather of 11 year old MK. MK told her cousin that JS was sexually assaulting her. MK begged her cousin not to tell anyone. Cousin told her mother and took MK to report the incidents to the police. MK described several sexual encounters with JS including performing oral sex the night before. MK described the underwear that JS was wearing. The underwear was obtained through a search warrant and MK's DNA was found on the underwear.

JS refused to enter into a plea agreement and I had to make the difficult decision to put MK on the witness stand. It was difficult to watch MK go through testifying but I prepared her thoroughly and JS was convicted.

Case 2 - Three co-defendants homicide case. MH was stabbed to death while sitting in Mellon Park. The police had no suspects until two years after the murder. The police received a tip that one of the individuals responsible for the murder was observed in downtown Pittsburgh. The police approached the suspect and took him in for questioning. The suspect, Marvin, disclosed what happened that night and implicated two additional people. Marvin only knew the other two individuals by their nicknames. I worked with Marvin and his defense attorney for approximately two years to figure out the legal names of the other two suspects.

In a jury trial, Marvin testified against the co-defendants and they were convicted. This was the first time I worked with a cooperating defendant. The defense attorney often allowed me to speak with Marvin without her presence because she knew that I would not take advantage of the situation and that I would honor the agreement that I had made.

Case 3 - FG and AB were dating and had a volatile relationship. One day FG saw AB walking down the street. FG forced AB to get into his car. He then drove her about 45 minutes to a house in another city. Once inside the house, FG made AB strip naked and get in the bathtub. Once in the tub FG urinated on AB then turned the cold shower on her and made her stay in the tub. When she got out of the tub, FG raped her.

During the trial FG represented himself. When he questioned AB, he did so in 3rd person which caused AB to answer the questions in 3rd person. During a break I told AB to stop responding to him as if he is not the person you're talking about. I told her to make him take ownership of what he did to you. When she returned to the stand she stood up to him and did not respond to the questions like he wanted her to respond. You could see that she was no longer going to let him have power over her.

The three cases that I listed above show a range of trial skills - a homicide case, a child abuse case, and a domestic violence case. The proceedings at times were contentious but I always handled myself with the utmost professionalism. Judges will often have to handle contentious and difficult situations. I believe my experience in having multiple jury trials, handling different types of cases, and arguing motions before the court make me ready to take on the responsibilities of the bench

5. Improvements to the courts

Courts are in the business of serving the public by providing the fair, efficient and prompt administration of justice.

- a. Do you perceive shortcomings in our current court system? Please provide examples.

One of the major problems the criminal court faces is case backlog and delays. Allegheny Courts often have more cases than they can efficiently process. This causes long wait times for trials. When delays occur this impacts defendants, victims, and witnesses. Delay also causes

prolonged pretrial detention. Delay impacts witnesses' memories which impacts the case. This is also a risk to the Defendant's right to a speedy trial.

There was a case involving a prison riot that happened in 2014. The case was delayed for various reasons. The last delay was a request made by the defendant to obtain new counsel. The case languished for approximately 3 years without the court ruling on the issue. This delay impacted the defendant's right to a speedy trial.

b. If elected, how would you go about correcting these problems? What specific steps would you take to improve the quality and delivery of results to litigants and the public?

I would limit the number of postponements given on a case. I would implement strict case management deadlines. Also, do an early assessment to identify complex issues and resolve them quickly. I could also triage cases by prioritizing urgent matters while streamlining simpler cases.

6. Judicial selection process

a. Do you believe state judges should be elected? Why/why not?

Yes I believe state judges should be elected because elections give the people a voice in choosing those who interpret and enforce the law. Also since judges' decisions impact citizens' lives, voters should have a say in who serves on the bench. Electing judges also prevents political elitism and broadens the pool of candidates.

b. If not, what system do you believe should be used instead, and why?