

What to Consider When Voting for a Judge

Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts believes that elections are not the best way to select judges. However, as long as Pennsylvania continues to elect judges PMC offers the following guidelines for voters seeking to make meaningful decisions about judicial candidates.

<i>What do voters need to know?</i>	<i>How can voters get this information?</i>
<p>Evaluate the candidate’s legal experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long has the candidate practiced law? • What types of cases has he or she handled? • How much courtroom experience does he or she have? • How many cases has the candidate tried? • For appellate court candidates, how many appeals has he or she argued before the appellate courts of Pennsylvania and the federal appellate courts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate’s Bio or Resume, available on candidate’s website. • Bar associations’ evaluation commissions. • Voters’ Guides published by League of Women Voters Citizen Education Fund. • Newspaper archives or Internet.
<p>Evaluate the candidate’s reputation for fairness and integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judges must apply the law evenhandedly, without regard to their personal beliefs, popular opinion, or political pressure. • Judges must be of the highest integrity – they must be able to make difficult decisions even when those decisions are unpopular. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar associations’ judicial evaluation commissions interview colleagues, other attorneys and judges about judicial candidates, seeking information about the candidates’ integrity, ethics and reputation. • Endorsements of organizations and individuals voters respect and trust can provide information about the candidate’s character and reputation for fairness and integrity.
<p>Evaluate the candidate’s community involvement and public service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voters should consider whether the candidate has demonstrated a commitment to public service. • Has the candidate been involved in charitable work? • Has the candidate performed pro bono legal work - donating time and services to individuals or organizations that otherwise could not afford legal representation? • Has the candidate been involved in community activities and efforts to improve the neighborhood, town or city? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate’s Bio or Resume, available on candidate’s website. • Bar associations’ evaluation commissions. • Voters’ Guides published by League of Women Voters Citizen Education Fund. • Newspaper archives or Internet.
<p>Evaluate the candidate’s involvement in ongoing educational and professional activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the candidate been active in the promotion and improvement of the legal profession? • Has the candidate demonstrated a commitment to the profession and its activities, including ongoing legal education, mentoring young lawyers, pro bono work and charitable activities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate’s Bio or Resume, available on candidate’s website. • Bar associations’ evaluation commissions. • Voters’ Guides published by League of Women Voters Citizen Education Fund. • Newspaper archives or Internet.