

## What to Consider When Voting in Judicial Retention Elections

Retention elections are nonpartisan yes/no elections, in which voters decide whether sitting judges should continue to serve for another term. In order to decide how to vote in retention elections, voters need to know who the judges are, what they do and how they have served.

<i>To evaluate a judge's performance, voters should consider the following:</i>	<i>How Voters Can Get this Information:</i>
<p><b>What is the judge's reputation for fairness and integrity?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judges must apply the law evenhandedly, without regard to their personal beliefs, popular opinion, or political pressure.</li> <li>• Judges must be of the highest integrity – they must be able to make difficult decisions even when those decisions are unpopular.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bar associations' judicial evaluation commissions interview colleagues, other attorneys and judges about retention judges, seeking information about the candidates' integrity, ethics and reputation.</li> <li>• Endorsements of organizations and individuals voters respect and trust can provide information about the candidate's character and reputation for fairness and integrity.</li> <li>• Newspaper and Internet reports about important decisions by the judge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is the judge's reputation in the legal community?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do lawyers who have practiced before the judge view the judge?</li> <li>• How do lawyers rate the judge's legal skill, reasoning and knowledge?</li> <li>• Do lawyers respect the judge, even when he or she has ruled against them?</li> <li>• Does the judge handle his or her workload efficiently and expeditiously?</li> <li>• How does the judge treat litigants, lawyers, witnesses, jurors, and court personnel who are present in the court?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bar associations' judicial evaluation commissions interview colleagues, other attorneys and judges about retention judges, seeking information about their skills and knowledge.</li> <li>• Newspaper archives or Internet.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluate the judge's involvement in educational and professional activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the judge worked to advance the cause of justice and improve the administration of the courts?</li> <li>• Has the judge participated in ongoing education programs for lawyers, remained involved in bar association activities or in other ways contributed to the promotion of the legal profession?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidate's Bio or Resume, available on candidate's website.</li> <li>• Bar associations' evaluation commissions.</li> <li>• Voters' Guides published by League of Women Voters Citizen Education Fund.</li> <li>• Newspaper archives or Internet.</li> </ul>

**Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts, 2007.**