

EVALUATION TIPS

How should I judge a judicial candidate?

Resources for an informed decision

Every election presents voters with important choices. A responsible voter makes informed decisions. Where judicial candidates are concerned, many voters feel they do not know what the issues are, or what qualities to look for in a candidate.

There are a number of factors that can indicate whether someone is qualified to be a judge. Here are some ideas to consider:

Focus on essential qualities of a good judge

- ✓ **Integrity**
A judge should be honest, impartial, and committed to the rule of law
- ✓ **Professional Competence**
A judge should have a keen intellect, extensive legal knowledge and strong writing skills
- ✓ **Judicial Temperament**
A judge must be neutral, decisive, respectful and composed
- ✓ **Experience**
A judge should have a strong record of professional excellence in the law
- ✓ **Service**
A judge should be committed to public service and the administration of justice

Judges decide cases that range from disputes people have with corporations or businesses to child abuse allegations, to sentencing criminals. Unlike our representatives in the legislative branch, we depend on judges to stand apart from political and partisan ideas, and to focus on the fair resolution of problems and disputes we need help with. As a result, you need to examine a judge's character, integrity and willingness to decide cases based on the law and the evidence. Judges should not be influenced by special interests, or fear losing their position because a powerful group dislikes a particular decision.

Find out whether a judicial candidate has those qualities

- ✓ Review web sites and voter guides provided by nonpartisan groups such as the League of Women Voters
- ✓ The local bar association in your area may rate candidates, or guide you to other information such as judicial performance evaluations
- ✓ Attend voter information sessions, review newspaper endorsements, and determine if any disciplinary actions have been taken against a candidate (as an attorney or judge throughout their career)
- ✓ Above all, consider who is paying for any advertising about any particular judicial election.

Discuss your findings with people whose opinions you value

See if they have other information or other views you should consider.

Be wary of special interests who distort the truth or the issues.

Ask questions if their information seems different from yours. Be concerned if the candidates, or those who talk about them, make promises. Judges must decide each case based on the facts and the law, and not some pre-determined position.



“When a judge does what is right according to the law, when a judge decides each case strictly on the merits, when a judge gives every case and every person the same treatment, our courts are what they have always been and must always be... fair and free.”

From “Fair and Free” featuring Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, Ret.

The National Association of Women Judges "Informed Voters - Fair Judges" Project

is a non-partisan program to inform voters about how to make sure our judges are fair and impartial. Its goal is to inform citizens about the judicial system and to ensure that judges are elected on the basis of their character and ability. Politics and special interests should have no place in American courts. Visit the Informed Voters – Fair Judges Project web site at <http://ivp.nawj.org/>

AFTER YOU LEARN ALL YOU CAN, INFORM OTHERS AND VOTE.

Learn more at <http://ivp.nawj.org>

