



## 2020 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

### Mary S. Schostok Appellate Justice – 2<sup>nd</sup> District

1. State the main reason why voters should return you to the bench.

**I was elected to the Appellate Court in 2010, after being appointed to the position in 2008 by the Illinois Supreme Court. During my time on the Appellate Court I have written over 1,100 dispositions and heard 100's of oral arguments. The Second District Appellate Court is a hardworking court, which takes each case extremely seriously and works as a team to be sure that we come up with the correct disposition. I want to continue to be a part of this awesome court, and I want to continue to work hard for the People of the 2nd Appellate District. I have the, the experience, the temperament, the knowledge of the law and the passion to do the job. I love my job and wake every morning excited for another work day. I feel that the work that I do makes a difference and I cannot imagine doing anything else.**

**In short, voters should retain me because I am qualified to discharge the work of the court, to review cases on appeal, draft clear disposition and effectively administer the court in the years to come. I love the work of this court and am proud of what has been accomplished. Yet, challenges remain and I believe I am well prepared address future solutions.**

2. What actions have you taken as a judge of which you are most proud?

**I am extremely proud of the work I have done on the bench, particularly assisting to reduce the backlog that we previously had in our court. This occurred when I was Presiding Justice and continues to this day. But I am also extremely proud of the opportunities I have been given as a result of my position as an Appellate Court Judge. I have a passion for literacy and through my position as judge, and in partnership with the Illinois Judges Association I have been able to encourage the judges throughout our state to go into the schools and introduce grade school children to the judiciary, as well as read to the students, as well as encourage them to read. This program, "*Page it Forward*" began in 2014 and continues to be an extremely popular program throughout the state.**

3. Name and describe one change you would make in the Illinois court system.

**I would like to see "less political" judicial races in our state. It is difficult to run a race because judges are not permitted to campaign**

as others, as we are not permitted to give our opinions/positions. Frankly, judges should not be politicians. I feel running as a judge affiliated with a political party is also extremely difficult. My robe is not red or blue - it is black, and regardless of your political affiliation a judge must decide your case based upon the facts and the law. I would not be opposed to merit selection, if we could ensure an independent panel to make the appointments based upon "merit" and not "politics." At minimum, I would like to see Retention of judges achieved differently. My suggestion would be that the bar association conduct evaluations and bar polls, and if the judge has a certain bar poll rating/recommendation he or she would be retained without having to be placed on the ballot. If the judge does not have a certain rating, he/she is then placed on the ballot.

4. One prominent Illinois judicial evaluation survey asks attorneys to evaluate candidates on Integrity, Impartiality, Legal Ability and Temperament. Critique yourself in these four areas as to how you personally approach your job as a judge?

**I pride myself on my integrity and conduct myself on the bench just as I conduct myself in my everyday life. I feel as an individual or as a judge if you do not have integrity you have nothing. I am extremely principled, which equates to fairness. I am confident that attorneys know that when they appear before me they are getting a "fair shake" and a judge with high morals deciding their client's case.**

**On the bench it is unfathomable to me to be anything but impartial. I am beholding to no one and nothing but the rule of law. When on the bench a judge typically makes one side unhappy, but if one makes a decision based upon the law and the facts and not based upon partiality then the decision is the correct decision and lawyers and litigants can "swallow the pill" much easier. Impartiality again harkens back to "fairness." If litigants feel they are being treated fairly/impartially they often feel they have been given again, a "fair shake" and their day in court.**

**Legal ability comes from much hard work, commitment, experience and love of the law. Being on the Appellate Court I am blessed with the privilege, the ability, and the time to really study the law and delve into the issues presented to me in the cases that I have been assigned. My hard work ethic allows me to devote much time to my cases and the issues presented therein. I love the law and love to really "dissect" cases. Doing so helps me prepare for oral arguments and to be equipped to question the attorneys on the cases upon which they rely. I feel it is important that I know the issues and the case law as well as the lawyers that appear before me. Legal abilities are also extremely important in preparing dispositions/Opinions. As I stated previously - it is important "to get it right." Our dispositions are relied upon as precedent, and legal ability is essential. Knowing that cases we release are relied upon by trial court judges and lawyers prompt me to work extremely hard to ensure that my legal abilities are as sharp as expected from an judge sitting on a court of review.**