



2020 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

Janet Adams Brosnahan Cook County Circuit Judge

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

For more than 30 years I have worked in the Chicago legal community, as a lawyer, a judge and a volunteer. I always strive to improve and to grow in my understanding of the law and the issues that affect the people I serve. I believe that my experience, my expertise and my empathy qualify me to retain this position.

I have been a judge since December 2002. In my current assignment as a jury trial judge in the Law Division at the Daley Center, I preside over the most complex, high-stakes civil cases filed in the circuit court. In my nearly 18 years on the bench, I have tried hundreds of bench trials, approximately 150 jury trials, and I have authored hundreds of written opinions on a vast array of issues - civil and criminal, substantive and procedural. The Appellate Court has affirmed my rulings on well over 90% of the issues raised. I have frequently been invited to speak at seminars, symposiums and schools on various legal topics. I have authored articles published in legal journals. My progression on the bench, and the sheer volume of my work product demonstrate my diligence and my conscientious work ethic.

To be worthy of the role, even the most hardworking and knowledgeable jurist must also endeavor to understand the practical realities and challenges that lawyers and litigants face. To this end, I believe my volunteer service (for example, at the food pantry, at women's shelters, at the homeless shelter, at Misericordia, and as a tutor for a grade school student from Englewood) gives me insight and perspective that enhance my performance as a judge. My community service and civic engagement are important components of my qualifications to be retained.

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

A judge should be prepared, knowledgeable and timely in her rulings. Lawyers who regularly appear before me know that I will review any briefs and legal authority presented to me - thoroughly and without delay. I will be familiar with the facts and issues presented, and I will be prompt in ruling. I am proud of the reputation I have earned as both hardworking and fair-minded.

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

The unfortunate and unprecedented occurrence of the pandemic has forced us to adapt. The pandemic has required more reliance on modern tools of technology. Conducting court hearings remotely has been challenging at times; however, we have learned that utilization of virtual court hearings and discovery proceedings can significantly reduce the inconveniences, costs and conflicts associated with litigating in person. Even after this health threat has subsided, we should continue to expand our use of technology to increase efficiency, expand accessibility, and decrease litigation expenses.

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?

My responses to questions above touch upon my legal ability.

Regarding temperament, I work to maintain comfortable lines of communication with lawyers and litigants, and endeavor to be welcoming and responsive to their questions. Generally, I strive to be approachable and readily available to address questions and concerns regarding courtroom procedures or expectations. I believe my demeanor reinforces my recognition that I am a public servant. When interacting with self-represented individuals, I take care to speak in understandable terms and to show patience while conveying the message that the justice system is not only for those specially trained in the law. I feel even unsuccessful litigants and lawyers can feel respect and appreciation for the process if they are listened to and treated with the courtesy, patience and dignity they deserve.

In both public and private life, a judge must be ever mindful of his or her reputation. By being honest, forthright, transparent and conscious to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, I believe I have earned a reputation for integrity.

To foster confidence in my impartiality, I remain committed to ensuring that all are treated fairly and equally in my courtroom. My rulings are governed by the law and not by sympathy, bias or prejudice. I guard against being influenced by pre-conceived notions, personal or professional alliances. If any relationship I have creates doubt about my ability to be impartial, recusal is called for.