



## ICJL 2018 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

### Joan Margaret O'Brien Cook County Circuit Judge

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

**The main reason voters should return me to the bench is because I have a solid track record. I have been a judge for almost 18 years and have been the supervising judge of the felony courts in the 5th Municipal District since 2011. I work hard and run my call efficiently.**

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

**My proudest accomplishment as a judge was seeing the first veteran graduate from Veterans Treatment Court. I started the Drug Treatment Court and the Veterans Treatment Court in the Bridgeview courthouse. My first graduate was a respectful young man who had no criminal background until he stole something and ended up in my courtroom. With the assistance of the VA we were able to assist him with housing and a job. He completed all the conditions of probation without a single violation. The most remarkable thing was that the police officer who arrested him came to the first few court dates to support this vet and accepted my invitation to attend his graduation from the program.**

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

**The one change that I would make in the court system is merit selection of judges. The only way to have true merit selection is to keep politics out of it, unfortunately I don't think that is possible here, at least now. I was promoted in the State's Attorney's Office to be the highest ranking woman in the Criminal Division as the Deputy Bureau Chief. I achieved this position through hard work. I have no political connections. I ran for judge and beat the party's slated candidate and am the supervising judge of the felony courtrooms all achieved because of hard work (and a little luck!).**

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?

**a. My Integrity is of paramount importance to me, it is my reputation that if damaged would be difficult to repair. I hold myself personally and professionally to a high standard, to always do the right thing,**

**even if it is the hard thing. My integrity has never been questioned and I have never received a negative rating from any bar association.**

**b. My Impartiality, I am fair to both sides and always keep an open mind until I have heard everything the parties have presented.**

**c. My Legal Ability, I stay current on the law by reading recently decided cases and attending continuing legal education classes. I have lectured on Criminal Law Updates for a local bar association. As the supervising judge, I give my judges information on changes in the law.**

**d. My Temperament is one of my strengths, I have a long fuse, a lot of patience. I treat attorneys, defendants, and witnesses with respect. I have had several challenging defendants that had anger issues and mental health problems and have been able to give them the opportunity to express themselves if they are pro se and still keep their cases moving.**