



ICJL 2018 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

Mary Colleen Roberts Cook County Circuit Judge

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

I have sat as a judge coming up on 12 years. Prior to becoming a judge my practice of law allowed me to serve as a trial attorney and judicial hearing officer. I believe it's important to retain me on the bench because of the knowledge and experience I have amassed over the years. I enjoy a good reputation as a fair, just, efficient and effective judge. I currently sit in the Domestic Relations Division. I have served in this assignment since October of 2015. Before coming to Domestic Relations I served in the Criminal Division, Municipal Division and the Juvenile Justice Division. I work hard and do my best to effectively serve the people of Cook County.

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

In the courtroom in Maywood where I sit a large number of litigants are self-represented (SRL). I handle three court calls, Divorce, Parentage and Child Support. I found the biggest challenge I faced in being able to effectively run my courtroom was dealing with litigants who were unprepared to represent themselves. So I came up with a Volunteer Attorney Program to assist the SRL's before they presented their matter to the Court. These volunteers talk with the SRL's and help them identify missing paperwork or steps necessary to successfully present their issues to the Court. Additionally, by providing real time assistance the volunteer attorneys give SRL's a meaningful and productive experience in my courtroom.

The other action that I am most proud of is my role in the Access to Community Treatment (ACT) Court. This is a Drug Treatment Court I started with a team of professionals from Chicago Appleseed, Cook County State's Attorney's Office, Cook County Public Defender's Office, TASC, Cook County Probation Department, The Office of the Chief Judge and Adult Redeploy Illinois of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. This program took addicted drug and retail theft offenders and gave them rapid access to community-based treatment. This program intervened in the lives of offenders with high criminogenic needs and ended the expensive and ineffective cycle of incarceration. Once admitted to the program, participants completed an 18 month program (with potential for completion in as little as 12 months) that consisted of court supervision and community based treatment.

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

I believe more attorneys need step into the courtrooms and volunteer their time to assist self represented litigants (SRL) as they move their case through the civil court system. Therefore, the change I would make would create a centralized volunteer attorney program that would assign attorneys to courtrooms with high volume SRL cases. These volunteer attorneys would assist the SRL's before they presented their matter to the Court. They would talk with the SRL's and help them identify missing paperwork or steps necessary to successfully present their issues to the Court. Additionally, by providing real time assistance they would give SRL's a meaningful and productive experience in the courtroom.

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 think I am a fair and unbiased judge. Everyday I have cases and people before me who look to the Court to resolve disputes. I look to the law for the answers and apply it as it is appropriate to the case. The answer I may reach as required by the law may not be the answer I personally like. However, that is of no consequence because as a Judge I am required to follow the law. Following the law was the mandate I swore to abide by when I was sworn in as a Judge in 2006. I believe it informs how I personally approach my job as a judge. It requires me to be at my best in running my court call, knowing the law, presiding over hearings and trials. It also requires me to be even tempered. I think I meet each of these requirements everyday when I step on the bench to serve the people of Cook County as a Circuit Court Judge.