



2020 Judicial Retention Questionnaire

Shelley Lynn Sutker-Dermer Cook County Circuit Judge

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

Over the past 25 years, I have gained tremendous experience both on the bench as a judge presiding over a felony courtroom and administering the Second Municipal District of the Circuit Court of Cook County. As a Presiding Judge, I am responsible for ensuring that the District is well-run and efficient. I foster an environment of professionalism, collaboration and mutual respect among judges, attorneys, court personnel and citizens. Also, I am an effective advocate for the District in the larger court system. I also possess the qualities that are essential to being an excellent judge: integrity, energy, good judgment, even temperament and impartiality. I have received only favorable ratings from the bar associations.

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

I have worked hard to develop Problem-Solving Courts in the 2nd Municipal District. Our District now has a Mental Health Court which is the largest in Cook County as well as a Veteran's Court, Drug Court and Misdemeanor Mental Health Court. I am proud of our firm commitment to Restorative Justice and the successful life-changing outcomes it has yielded.

I am proud to have served on the Associate Judges Nominating Committees since 2005. In this capacity, I have had a role in determining the future of the judiciary and to ensure that highly competent and diverse members of the legal community are appointed to serve as associate judges.

I strongly believe in mentoring students from grammar school to law school. I go out to high schools to speak to classes when they have "Ask the Expert" days and I always invite them to come for a visit to the courthouse. I have had Interns and Externs in the courthouse every year and have gotten applications for these unpaid positions each year through referrals from students who had extremely rewarding experiences here.

In furtherance of my commitment to the community at large, the Second Municipal District under my direction has hosted an Annual High School Mock Trial Competition in conjunction with the North Suburban Bar Association for the past seven years with approximately 18 teams participating from the suburban Chicagoland

area. Judges, State's Attorneys, Public Defenders and attorneys in private practice attend as mentors and evaluators and work together to make this event educational and fun while learning about the court system.

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

The one change that I would make to the court system is to update, upgrade and remediate the technology that the court system uses. The onset of the pandemic undoubtedly illustrated the challenge that the court system faced by not having the videoconferencing technology in place to meet the challenges that our judges, attorneys, clerks and litigants confronted emergently. In addition, the courts have been systemically lagging in the digital accessibility of court files from which all stakeholders may benefit.

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?

In terms of integrity, I adjudicate a case based on the evidence and the law regardless of the popularity of the decision. Over the years, I believe I have displayed a high level of integrity through my conduct on and off the bench.

In terms of impartiality, I believe that I preside over the courtroom in a manner that eschews favoritism and promotes public confidence in the judiciary. I adhere to the tenet that "justice is blind."

In terms of legal ability, I am well aware that the law is not static. Notwithstanding my 25 years on the bench, I continually work at my craft by familiarizing myself with changes in statutes and case law. I attend the Educational Conference sponsored by the AOIC. In addition, I serve as the Co-Chair of the New Judges School for the Circuit Court of Cook County. Working in this capacity, I have created and presented the "New Judges' Guide" which includes a variety of topics such as Mandatory Fines and Assessments, Expungements and Sealings and a Judges' Guide to Pro Se Proceedings.

In terms of temperament, I manage a court call efficiently without sacrificing the attention and respect that each litigant deserves. I believe it is important for litigants to feel that they have had "their day in court" while striving to maintain civility among the parties. Against this backdrop, I make fair, timely and well-reasoned decisions.