



ICJL 2012 Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Celia Louis Gamrath

Cook County Circuit Judge – 8th Subcircuit – Chiola Vacancy

1. State the qualifications and experiences that make you qualified to serve on the bench in Illinois.

Since the Illinois Supreme Court appointed me to the bench in June 2010, I have presided over hundreds of cases in the Municipal and Domestic Relations Divisions of the Circuit Court of Cook County. I was appointed after a thorough vetting process by retired Chief Justice Thomas Fitzgerald's screening committee (including Anton Valukas and Dawn Clark Netsch) and complete evaluation of the bar associations. I am the only candidate in my race appointed by the Supreme Court to teach other judges at the statewide Judicial Education Conferences and to serve as a Peer Review Editor of the Domestic Relations Benchbook.

Prior to becoming a judge, I was a partner at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck, where I specialized in appellate and complex litigation. I represented individual clients and children in a variety of significant cases in the Circuit, Appellate and Supreme Courts. Before that, I served as a judicial clerk to judges in the Appellate Court of Illinois. As a practicing lawyer for 16 years, I worked closely with excellent, ethical lawyers and judges and received great training. This past year-and-a-half has allowed me to demonstrate the very skills I learned from them and that are necessary to be a good, fair, compassionate judge. Based on integrity, professional experience, bar ratings and endorsements, I am qualified to continue to serve on the bench.

2. 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 they make you qualified to serve on the bench.

***Integrity.* The Chicago Bar Association notes that I am Qualified and "well respected" for my integrity. Integrity means being honest, moral and ethical. Without it, there is no trust; the public loses confidence and the judicial system fails. I will not allow this to happen.**

***Impartiality.* Impartiality is critical to a judge's role in making decisions and credibility determinations. This means making decisions without bias or prejudice. My volunteer activities and leadership positions in various non-profit boards and bar**

organizations have brought me into contact with diverse groups of people and trained me to be a fair and impartial judge.

Legal Ability. Judicial decisions should be made by those who know and follow the law. The Chicago Council of Lawyers and Chicago Bar Association have rated me Qualified and commented favorably on my knowledge of the law, legal ability, writing and research skills. As a practicing lawyer, I was named one of the top 50 female lawyers in Illinois and one of the Best Lawyers in America in the areas of family law and appeals. I am honored that the Illinois Supreme Court recognized by legal ability by appointing me to teach other judges at the statewide Judicial Education Conferences and to serve as a Peer Review Editor of the Domestic Relations Benchbook.

Temperament. A judge's demeanor and good temperament helps instill public confidence in the legal system and provides a calming effect. Everyone in my courtroom – from staff to lawyers to pro se litigants – receives equal treatment and is treated with the utmost courtesy, dignity and respect. The Chicago Council of Lawyers notes that I have a good temperament and lawyers repeatedly comment on the calmness in my courtroom.

3. Describe the case in which you are most proud of your work as a lawyer.

I was the attorney who represented the Petitioner in In re Marriage of Best, which resulted in the Illinois Supreme Court's recognition that declaratory judgments may be used in advance of trial to determine the validity of a premarital agreement, and that such judgments may be appealed immediately under Supreme Court Rule 304(a). I argued this case in the Illinois Supreme Court, wrote the briefs and convinced the Illinois Supreme Court to accept the petition for leave to appeal. The Best opinion is of broad significance because it allows divorce litigants to streamline the divorce process by obtaining a binding declaration of rights prior to engaging in full discovery on potentially irrelevant issues at trial.

4. Name one change you would make in the Illinois court system.

One change I would make in the Illinois court system is to improve technology and to allow for universal e-filing. E-filing systems provide greater service and convenience, allow judges to view files more rapidly, and give the public greater public access to court records, thereby enhancing efficiency and transparency.

5. Are there civil litigation reforms that you would like to see enacted to remedy particular problems that you have detected, either as a practicing lawyer or as a sitting judge? Are there reforms that would benefit the civil justice system? What needs to be changed? Should the enactment of any such changes be the province of the legislature, the Supreme Court or by Constitutional amendment?

Reforms designed to prevent unnecessary litigation and to provide alternative dispute resolution options before trial in virtually all civil cases would be desirable. Whether that reform is achieved by

legislation, court rule or constitutional amendment depends on the particular legal area or procedure.

6. Do you believe that our judicial system adequately deters and penalizes frivolous litigation? If not, what reforms would you like to see?

Frivolous litigation should be deterred by the judicial system because of the costs to litigants and taxpayers and the strain it puts on the system. However, people have a right to full access to our courts. Any reforms need to balance these principles.

7. Do you believe the Illinois Constitution precludes legislative establishment of limitations on civil damages? Are there or should there be distinctions among economic, non-economic and punitive damages?

As a sitting judge, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 67, it is not proper for me to comment on or advocate a particular position relative to actual or proposed legislation and civil damages.