



ICJL 2012 Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

Michael Ian Bender Cook County Circuit Judge – 9th Subcircuit – Bender Vacancy

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

Following positive bar association screening, the Illinois Supreme Court appointed me to serve as a Circuit Court Judge in 2008. I currently serve in the Domestic Relations Division, where I hear cases involving child abuse, neglect, custody, parenting time, support, and college contribution.

My years of litigation experience as an attorney, as well as my judicial experience, make me qualified to continue serving as a judge. First, as a judge I have presided over thousands of cases. These have been civil, criminal, bench and jury trials. I have never lost sight of the fact that I serve the public. I listen carefully to the parties, witnesses and attorneys. I follow the law and never legislate from the bench. Second, my experience as a trial lawyer also makes me qualified to continue serving. As an attorney I litigated most area of law. I handled federal and state cases, civil and criminal matters, and tried bench and jury trials. My litigation experience gives me an added understanding of the cases I am asked to resolve. For example, I appreciate how an attorney prepares for trial, and I know the concerns of the litigants who are seeking relief.

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.

As a judge, I always maintain the highest levels of Integrity and Impartiality. It is vital that the public has confidence in the integrity and impartiality of their court system. In regard to legal ability, my many years of experience aids me in this regard. I continuously follow the rulings of the higher courts, and remain knowledgeable regarding new legislation.

As to temperament, I am humbled by the following finding of the Chicago Bar Association's Judicial Evaluation Committee:

"Judge Bender is dedicated and well regarded for his knowledge of the law, excellent temperament, diligence, and commitment to the justice system."

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

I represented many victims of hate crimes throughout my years of private practice. I am most proud of each and every case.

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

I would continue to increase the use of alternative dispute resolution.

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?

As a sitting judge, I respectfully decline responding to this question based upon the Judicial Cannons Ethics. I, however, always apply the Constitution, Supreme Court Rules, and statutes to the evidence.

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

As a sitting judge, I respectfully decline responding to this question based upon the Judicial Cannons of Ethics.

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, I respectfully decline responding to this question based upon the Judicial Cannons of Ethics.