



## ICJL 2012 Judicial Candidate Questionnaire

**Ketki "Kay" Steffen**

**Cook County Circuit Judge – 13<sup>th</sup> Subcircuit – Pietrucha Vacancy**

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

**I have been a practicing attorney for 21 years and have devoted my entire career to public service. As I mentioned, I am a Cook County Circuit Court Judge currently presiding in the Rolling Meadows Courthouse where I hear Civil and Criminal cases. I was selected for Judgeship by the Illinois Supreme Court in January, 2010, based on my merit and credentials to fill a judicial vacancy. Since I was appointed to fill a vacancy, I must now run for office and am currently a candidate in the 13th judicial sub circuit that includes the townships of Schaumburg, Barrington, Hanover, Palatine and parts of Wheeling. I am kindly asking for your support and endorsement of my candidacy. I hope you find my credentials to be meritorious for the following reasons:**

**For eighteen years, I had been privileged to serve and protect our community as a prosecutor at the Rolling Meadows Courthouse. I have tried over a thousand violent misdemeanor and felony crimes and have been privileged to argue before the Illinois Appellate Court. I have also worked hand in hand with the Major Crimes Assisting Unit ("MCAT") on complex murder investigations. I have worked with the Hanover Park Police Departments for 18 years and I enjoy their friendship and support. For the past decade, I specialized in Domestic Violence cases and became a specialist in International Extraditions. I was instrumental in the proposal and passage of the 'Cynthia Bischof GPS Legislation' that allows judges to place tracking bracelets on repeat offenders. My work and expertise in International Extraditions has resulted in bringing back to justice murder and child sexual offenders who had escaped our justice system and were hiding in foreign countries. My work in these areas was recognized and I am the proud recipient of the district attorney's scholarship, the 'Partners in Peace Award' and the 'Building Bridges Award'. My philosophy as a prosecutor was that no one is above the law and that the safety and security of the community is vital to its well-being.**

**After my Judicial appointment, I continue my life's work in Domestic Violence and am now privileged to be hearing 'elder abuse' cases as well. I have been evaluated by all Bar Associations and been found to be qualified/ recommended to continue my service to the community on the bench. My judicial philosophy is that while a judge must**

remain fair but firm; the bench should always be mindful of the judicial temperament and always exercise humility.

On a personal note, I am proud to live in the Barrington area with my husband Bob and our three beautiful children; Nicole (12), Alyssa (10), and Tristan (6). I immigrated to the United States from Mumbai, India at the age of fifteen and started my career working at McDonald's while attending Maine East High School in Park Ridge. Subsequently, I attended the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and went on to The John Marshall Law School on a Dean's scholarship. I attribute my humble success in life to the hard work and sacrifice of my parents.

In addition to my work, I have been an active volunteer in our community. I serve on the Barrington School district Vision 20/20 committee, am a advisor to Fellowship Housing, have been a board member of the Apna Ghar Domestic Violence Shelter and have chaired a pro-bono legal clinic.

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.

**I humbly believe that I possess the qualities of integrity, impartiality, legal ability and temperament that are the cornerstones of a good judge. I truly believe in treating others as you would have them treat you. I am an experienced litigator and now a judge for two years and I believe that I possess good legal ability. What I don't know, I am never afraid to learn or take some time to consult with others or research. My success in this country as a young immigrant has made me appreciate the opportunity and kindness of others and always helps me maintain a kind, even temperament on the bench.**

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

**The case I am most proud of as lawyer was the People v. Michael Giroux a domestic violence case involving my client Cindy Bischof who was brutally murdered by him shortly after he was released from jail. I along with her family members and friends, opted to do something positive out of this tragic event and I was subsequently instrumental in the proposal and passage of the Cynthia Bischof legislation that places tracking bracelets on repeal domestic abusers.**

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

**More transparency is needed throughout the system and better access for people who are not able to afford lawyers.**

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 Judges we are not allowed to comment upon these matters due to ethical issues and restrains upon us.**

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

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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?

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