

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
(Superior Court Judges)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Candidate Personal Contact Information (Fields marked with asterisks are required)

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Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: Judge Lane for Superior Court
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Campaign Manager Name: Amanda Hammock, Deputy CM
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Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? Superior Court

With which party are you registered? Democratic

Who are your opponents? Jill Beck, Pat Dugan

If there is not sufficient space to respond to the following questions, please attach additional sheets to the questionnaire.

1. *What in your background qualifies you to be a Judge of the Superior Court?*

My education, career, and upbringing have prepared me for the role as a judge of the Superior Court. The value of public service and hard work were instilled at an early age by my mother a retired Philadelphia Police Detective and my father, who served in the Marine Corps. After

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college, I taught social studies to public middle school students and decided to pursue a law degree. During law school, I provided pro bono legal services through the Domestic Violence Project and the Bankruptcy Project and co-chaired the Black Law Students Community Outreach Program. Upon graduation, I clerked for a judge in the Court of Common Pleas, then practice family law, became a Certified Child Advocate, and went to work as a trial attorney at the Defenders' Association where I represented defendants who could not afford legal counsel and faced serious felony charges. I then became Chief Legal Counsel in a Pennsylvania office. In 2013 I was elected to the Court of Common Pleas in 2013 and assigned to the Major Trial Trials program where I presided over serious felony criminal matters including but not limited to domestic/family violence, sexual assault, attempted murder, arson, robbery and burglary. I also handled Investigative Grand Jury matters and supervised re-entry programs. I am now assigned to the Complex Litigation jury trial program in the Civil Division. I also serve as Chair of the Board of City Trust Committee, (Board of Judges), Co-Chair of the Local Criminal Rules Committee, and as member of the Communication and Community Affairs, Civil Rules, Jury, FYI and Women Judges Initiative committees. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court appointed me to the County Adult Probation and Parole Advisory Committee (CAPPAC) where I serve as Co-Chair. Due to my broad base of legal, judicial, and leadership experience, I am uniquely qualified to handle the appellate matters which come before the Superior Court.

2. *How would you describe your judicial philosophy?*

Since the Supreme Court has discretion in deciding which cases it wishes to hear, the Superior Court is often the court of last resort for litigants. As a Superior Court judge, I would understand the responsibility we have to each litigant in taking their matter seriously and ensuring that the law was correctly applied, they had a fair hearing, and that the ends of justice met. In

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making decisions, I will keep an open mind and respect the opinion and perspectives of the other judges on our panel of three, but will ensure, with respect, that my opinion, perspectives, and life experiences are considered. While consensus is valuable, I would not hesitate to file a dissent if the circumstances justify such action.

3. *What are the most important factors you would look at in making a decision to reverse a trial court decision?*

The Superior Court is mindful of the challenges faced by the trial court and will generally defer to the trial court's determinations as to the admission of evidence and determinations of credibility. There are times, however, where the law has been misapplied or misinterpreted to a point where the error is not harmless but is prejudicial enough to require reversal. Other times, it may be within our power to revisit a rule of law applied below and reverse and remand with instructions as to how the trial court ought to proceed.

4. *Under what circumstances would you set aside a jury verdict in a criminal case? What factors would you look at?*

As a Superior Court judge on the appeal of a criminal jury verdict, if the Defendant were to argue that evidence is insufficient to establish guilt, we would take a fresh look at the evidence adduced at trial (in a light most favorable to the Commonwealth as required by law) and consider whether there is sufficient evidence to enable the factfinder to find every element of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. A jury verdict will be set aside if this standard is not met. If the defendant has argued for reversal based on the how the jury weighed the evidence, we may set aside a verdict only if the trial judge abused their discretion in denying a new trial because it "shocked the conscience," Although much deference is given to the trial judge under Pennsylvania law, there may be other grounds exist for setting aside a verdict, such as

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trial court's abuse of discretion in denying a mistrial due to admission of prejudicial evidence over objection or questions of impartiality of the jurors.

5. *Under what circumstances would you reduce a jury award of damages? What factors would you look at?*

Our courts respect the jury's role as factfinder and capacity to reach a fair and just decision in awarding damages. The Superior Court would not reduce a jury award of our own accord but assess whether to affirm or reverse the trial court's decision to deny a reduction of damages. To reverse the trial court, we would have to find an abuse of discretion or error of law. We would be bound to respect the discretion of the trial court and require reduction only if we find that the verdict is so grossly excessive that it *shocks the sense of justice*. Appellate courts are not to interfere with a jury verdict unless it clearly appears that the amount awarded resulted from "caprice, prejudice, partiality, corruption, or some other improper influence."

6. *Under what circumstances would you modify a jury award of punitive damages? What factors would you look at?*

As indicated above, the appellate courts give deference to a trial court's decision to deny the reduction of damages, including punitive damages. In determining whether a punitive damages award "shocks one's sense of justice" and whether the trial court abused its discretion or committed an error of law, the Superior Court would consider whether there is a reasonable relationship between the amount awarded and the goals of punishment and deterrence and the relationship between the compensatory damages award and the punitive damages award. We consider the defendant's behavior, the deterrent effect, the punitive damages award's likely effect as punishment for the defendant's outrageous conduct and the wealth of the defendant.

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