

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47

2019 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

(Common Pleas Court Judges)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

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

Name: Chesley Lightsey

Registration Address:

E-Mail:

Cell Phone:

Full Name of Campaign Committee: Friends of Chesley Lightsey for Judge

HQ Address: PO Box 4301, Philadelphia, PA 19118-9997

Campaign Manager Name: Denise Jones

Campaign Manager Phone: 215-601-1503

Campaign Manager E-Mail: wdjones0512@gmail.com

Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? Judge on the Court of Common Pleas - Philadelphia

Are you the incumbent? * Yes ___ No If yes, year first elected:

With which party are you registered? Democratic Party - I am endorsed by the Democratic Party of Philadelphia

Please list union leaders you seek input from when developing your legislative agenda:

Not applicable. As a candidate for judge, I am not allowed to present an agenda.

Who are your opponents? There are 10 open seats on the Court of Common Pleas. It is unknown how many candidates will be seeking these open seats until petitions are turned in. My best guess is that there will be approximate 35 candidates for the 10 seats.

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 Court of Common Pleas? Why do you want to be a judge?

After graduating from college with a degree in Elementary Education, I began teaching in public schools in Mississippi and Memphis, TN. It was during my first two years out of college that I realized I was gay and began the process of coming out. In the south at that time, and today, I could have been fired for being an "out" teacher. There was no teachers' union available to me at that time. Because of this, I moved to Philadelphia, where there were legal protections in place. I taught in a Quaker school for five more years before going to law school. It was my work with children as a teacher, that drove my passion to work with children who were victims of, and witnesses to, crime. After graduating from Temple Law, I accepted a position with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office where I have worked for most of the past 17 years. (I left for 3 years when my daughter was born and worked at Temple Law School.) But, my passion for working with crime victims, especially women and children, drew me back to the DA's Office.

During my years at that office, I have tried hundreds of cases in the Family Violence and Sexual Assault Unit and the Homicide/Non-fatal Shooting Unit. I specialized in cases involving children and women as victims. I was eventually asked to be the Chief of the Homicide/Non-fatal Shooting Unit and later I was the Chief of the Juvenile Division of the office. I also served as the Lead Attorney in the re-sentencing of all *Juvenile Lifers* in Philadelphia. Juvenile Lifers are people that were convicted of committing murder when they were under the age of 18 and received a sentence of life without the possibility of parole. As the lead attorney on that project, I helped re-sentence over 300 Juvenile Lifers from Philadelphia. Most of whom had served more than 25 years in prison. The combination of all of these experiences make me qualified to be a judge.

I want to be a judge, because I believe all people who come before a Court should have the benefit of a judge who understands the law, has high expectations of the attorneys in the room, has a calm demeanor, who is compassionate, and who has real life experience. I believe I possess all of these qualities. I want people from all walks of life to get a fair shake in the courtroom. I love this city that has been so good to me and I want to continue my career of public service in this very important role.

2. How would you describe your judicial philosophy if you are a sitting Common Pleas judge?

I do not have a judicial philosophy per se, other than to apply the same method of thorough analysis to every case. Specifically, I will consider the parties' arguments, the relevant facts, and the law as I understand it, including the text of any applicable statutes and the binding precedents of the higher courts. I will consistently apply the same level of analytical rigor to my evaluation of the parties' arguments, no matter who or what is involved in the legal action. Moreover, in my work as an Assistant District Attorney, I have not had occasion to evaluate broader legal principles or develop a substantive judicial philosophy.

3. Common Pleas Judges are sometimes asked by employers to set aside or vacate arbitration awards. What considerations, if any, would compel you to set aside or modify an arbitration award pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement? Are there any circumstances under which you believe you would set aside an arbitration award?

Canons of judicial ethics prevent me from answering this question.

4. Common Pleas Judges are often asked to issue injunctions in connection with labor disputes. What considerations would compel you in judging whether it is appropriate to issue an injunction in a labor dispute?

Canons of judicial ethics prevent me from answering this question.

5. Have you performed any pro bono work in your career within the last 2 years and if so, what was it?

My job as an Assistant District Attorney precluded me from participating in pro bono legal work. I have volunteered as a Head Coach for Mount Airy Baseball for the past 7 years (going into my 8th season). In some seasons, I have coached 2 different teams. I serve on the Vestry of my church and do significant volunteer work through the church. I am a volunteer youth basketball coach for the past 2 years. I took this season off because my campaign schedule conflicts with the winter game and practice schedule.

6. What would you consider in deciding to limit picketing in a labor dispute?

Canons of judicial ethics prevent me from answering this question.

7. Under what circumstances do you believe alternatives to incarceration are appropriate? What do you believe are the most effective programs for preventing recidivism?

Canons of judicial ethics prevent me from answering this question.

8. How many and what types of cases have you handled in the last several years?

I have handled approximately 40 cases in the past 5 years. They have primarily been homicide matters. In addition to those homicide cases, I have handled the re-sentencing of approximately 250 juvenile lifers in the past 5 years.

9. With an Adult Probation/Parole Department and a Prison Department so severely understaffed and underfunded, including the Options program and psychological services, what will you do to

make sure that your judicial orders don't turn into a series of "unfunded mandates," without any real force of law?

As a judge, my role in the justice system would be to evaluate the facts of cases and controversies that parties with standing to adjudicate legal claims present, and resolve each case on an individual basis by assessing the parties' legal arguments based on the law, as I understand it. I can only work within the confines of the available programming and guidelines available under the law. The canons of judicial ethics prevent me from speculating on what I might do in any given case.

10. What is your position on mandatory sentences?

Canons of judicial ethics prevent me from opining on particular policy positions regarding sentencing statutes or possible reforms.

11. Would you be in favor of a liaison from the probation department to discuss court problems with court administrative judges? Why or why not?

I would be in favor of such a liaison because I believe that conversations that are meant to help solve problems are always beneficial to any system.

