

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
(Common Pleas Court Judges)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

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

Name: Caroline Turner
Registration Address:
E-Mail:
Home Phone:
Work Phone: S/A
Cell Phone: S/A
HQ Phone: S/A
Fax: N/A
Work Address

Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: Turner For Judge PAC
HQ Address: 931 Federal St., Philadelphia, PA 19147
Campaign Manager Name:
Campaign Manager Phone:
Campaign Manager E-Mail:
Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? **Court of Common Pleas**

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

With which party are you registered? **Democrat**

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

The Judicial Code of Conduct prohibits me from having a legislative agenda

Who are your opponents? **None**

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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?

My first career was as a nurse, my second was in a human rights capacity resulting in being invited on a convoy by the Aragonese government to Bosnia. It was when I arrived in the US back in 1998 that I went back to school. I got my Masters from Upenn and then my law degree Temple Law in 2005. I was a Public Defender for 11 1/2 years and saw the justice system wreak havoc upon the accused's as well as victims' lives. I have been doing medical malpractice for the plaintiff in the civil arena for 5 1/2 years so have experience as a trial attorney in the civil practice. I have seen injustice internationally. I have seen it here and I have also suffered injustice personally. An immigrant from the UK, I became a citizen in 2007 but my oldest son was over 21 and therefore could not qualify under my citizenship. Having gone to high school and university here, he had to go back to England to live. He would come over regularly to visit his little boy but he came so often that immigration became suspicious and determined he could not return for 5 years. This devastated him, he declined mentally and he eventually lost hope and died. This terrible injustice made me even more determined than to live out his legacy in fighting for others suffering injustices. He always urged me to "keep on fighting" and that is what I do. As a lawyer I fight for my clients every day but I can only fight for one client at a time. As a judge I will be able to affect hundreds of people's lives a year as I administer justice fairly, and as I treat them with dignity and respect. I have pledged to work alongside community leaders, as I do now, and together we can bring hope, dignity, restoration, transparency, accountability, and compassion to my decisions in my courtroom.

2. What is your general judicial philosophy?

My general judicial philosophy is restorative justice. We need a community courtroom where both victims and the accused feel heard. Far too often victims feel uncared for and they feel there is little justice for them. Far too often the accused feel railroaded and confused by a system that is far from the "innocent until proven guilty" that it purports to be. I will have community liaison people working closely with me as I bring both justice and restoration to my courtroom and out into the community. Our communities are in desperate need of healing and restoration and I vow to be the kind of judge who will model my courtroom on restorative justice practices.

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?

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The legal test for setting aside arbitration awards sets a high bar. A judge may only modify or set aside an arbitration award where the award does not flow from the essence of the collective bargaining agreement, where it would go against public policy to implement it, where the arbitrator lacked jurisdiction over the issues that were before them, where they exceeded their authority or where constitutional issues are improperly decided by arbitrators.

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?

It is to statutes and case-law that I would look in determining whether to issue an injunction in a labor dispute. I would apply the facts of the case to existing law and act accordingly.

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

Yes. I regularly defend people from community in their criminal defense cases pro bono. I also am representing several people on their PCRA cases where they have been wrongly convicted.

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

Again, I would look to existing law as set out in statutes and case law. I would only limit picketing where it is required under legal precedent.

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

I believe alternatives to incarceration are appropriate in many cases. I believe: 1) If the sentencing judge is able, (together with the defendant and their family) to *identify* the reasons why the offense occurred; and then 2) *orders* conditions that directly aim to solve those issues (eg. if someone is suffering from addiction – rehab., if they're suffering from homelessness – finding housing, if needing to get a GED, job-training, mentorship, trauma recovery, etc.); and then 3) works *together* with the defendant to fashion a *structured plan* that will enable them to fulfill those identified sentencing conditions; and 4) brings them back regularly to check on their progress, then the defendant has both the *incentive and accountability* they need to succeed.

I also believe that this type of model is particularly effective when dealing with children who have violated the law as, given the right kind of structure, many will turn their lives around. The Sentencing Foundation is currently using this model of restorative justice. There are also several programs that I have already referred my clients to such as YASP (Youth Art Empowerment Project), and Why Not Prosper., Frontline Dads, etc.

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

I have handled numerous civil medical malpractice cases for the plaintiff in the last 5 years including trials, wrongful death cases and nursing home cases. I have also handled numerous pro bono criminal cases, and several PCRA petitions pro bono. Prior to the last 5 years I was a public defender for 11 years with a case load of 150 felony cases at a time and many trials ranging from homicide to drug cases to white collar crimes.

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?

I would follow the Sentencing Foundation's model which is already being used and led by Judge Sawyer in Philadelphia. Probation and parole officers have case-loads that are far too weighty. It will be me, as a judge, making sure that defendants get the level and expertise of supervision they need within approved and qualified community resources together with accountability and follow-up with me on a regular basis. That way I can see how a defendant is doing and make the necessary adjustments as needed.

10. What is your position on mandatory sentences?

I will follow the law as I am required to do at all times. However, I do believe that each defendant is an individual and that not all defendants should be put into the same category. I believe that mandatory minimums have taken discretion away from judges, fueled mass incarceration and had a deeply discriminatory effect on people of color.

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??

Yes. I think that the more communication there is between all representatives in the justice system, the better. With each department working separately there cannot be the necessary information -sharing and problem-solving that is required to make the system better for all those involved.

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