



Magisterial District Judge Candidate Questionnaire

The ACLU of Pennsylvania's Campaign for Smart Justice announced its Allegheny County launch in June of 2018. Since that time, a coalition of community-based justice organizations and ACLU-PA has been working to educate and engage elected officials, voters, and other stakeholders in the criminal legal system and its impact on issues such as pretrial detention and debtor's prisons, as well as substance use disorder and evictions - issues which disproportionately impact Black and brown Pennsylvanians in Allegheny County and across the commonwealth.

Disclaimer: The ACLU is a nonpartisan organization and we do not endorse candidates for election. The responses gathered from this questionnaire will be made available to the public on our website as voter information.

The following 18 questions address issues and practices that would be under your authority if you are elected/re-elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge.

Questions

Bail

The Pennsylvania Constitution and Rules of Criminal Procedure delineate a thorough and rigorous procedure for setting bail. Please answer the following about how you will proceed with setting bail if elected Magisterial District Judge and entrusted with the power to set bail.

- 1) If elected Magisterial District Judge, prior to setting any condition of bail, will you conduct a careful, individualized hearing and look at all of the factors listed in the Rules of Criminal Procedure (523), which include a person's employment status and community ties?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

This is clearly what should be done in every case.

- 2) If elected Magisterial District Judge, will you set bail based on a person's charge alone?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

This violates a person's rights & should not be done.

- 3) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you assign cash bail in an amount that a person can afford, as required in the Rules of Criminal Procedure (528 (A) & (B))?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Following the Rules of Criminal Procedure a relevant case law should be done in every case.

- 4) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you use cash bail as a way to keep a person incarcerated until trial pursuant to Rules of Criminal Procedure (524)?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

This could violate the Rules of Criminal Procedural & Constitutional protections

- 5) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you make pretrial

liberty the norm and pretrial detention the exception? For example, not arbitrarily denying bail?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

I will not arbitrarily deny bail. I will follow the Rules of Criminal Procedure, the relevant case law & both the U.S. & Pennsylvania Constitutions.

Racially Discriminatory Practices

6) Do you believe racial discrimination in Pennsylvania's criminal legal system is an issue?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Our country, & Pennsylvania, has a history of racial discrimination & those effects are still felt today.

7) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you work towards making sure you aren't deciding cases in a way that is discriminatory towards black and brown communities?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Discriminating based on race is prohibited by the constitution.

Fines & Costs

8) If elected Magisterial District Judge, will you comply with the requirements in the relevant statutes (42 Pa.C.S. § 9726(c) and (d)) for setting discretionary fines, and will you consider a defendant's financial resources when imposing such fines?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

The law should be followed in every case

- 9) If elected Magisterial District Judge, in cases in which you cannot immediately hold a payment determination hearing pursuant to the Rules of Criminal Procedure (456) (, will you schedule a new hearing and determine if a defendant can be released on their recognizance without requiring collateral?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Incarcerating people for an inability to pay violates a person's constitutional rights.

- 10) If elected Magisterial District Judge, will you and your staff comply with the Rules of Criminal Procedure (456) and statute (42 Pa.C.S. § 9730) by setting affordable payment plans for defendants?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

- 11) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you schedule payment determination hearings for defendants who have fallen behind on payment pursuant to the Rules of Criminal Procedure (456), rather than immediately issuing a discretionary warrant for arrest?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

12) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, with regards to cases involving youth (truancy cases and summary citations), will you consider the potential financial burden before setting fines for students?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

13) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, with regards to cases involving youth (truancy cases and summary citations), will you permit both fines and costs to be waived if the student returns to school, as allowed by statute (24 P.S. § 13-1333.3(b))?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Substance Use Disorder

14) Do you think incarceration is a form of treatment for individuals with substance use disorder?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

I am unaware of any peer-reviewed medical literature that identifies incarceration as a form of treatment for substance abuse disorders.

15) Do you believe substance use disorder is a mental health disorder (as it is recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in the DSM-V) and must be taken into consideration when handling criminal cases?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

If the American Psychiatric Association identifies a condition as a mental health disorder in the DSM-V then it is a mental health disorder.

Evictions

16) If elected to the position of Magistrate District Judge, will you evict those who can not afford to pay as communities are impacted by the residual effects of the COVID pandemic?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

I cannot give a yes or no answer to this. I will do everything I can under the law to resolve eviction cases without an eviction hearing through mediation. I will evaluate each COVID related emergency order as I get them & comply with the law.

Other

17) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you develop and seek out alternatives to incarceration in collaboration with the community you are serving?

Check one: Yes No

Explain:

Yes, Allegheny County has a strong record of diversionary courts & programs & I will work to expand these programs while always being consistent with maintaining community safety.

18) If elected to the position of Magisterial District Judge, will you be open to hearing feedback and working with community leaders in the community you plan to serve?

Check one: Yes

No

Explain:

Certainly. Feedback to working with
other leaders is how you grow & improve.
I welcome growth & improvement