



JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

2023 LANCASTER COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS RATINGS

The following candidates have been evaluated by the LBA Judiciary Committee. The Judiciary Committee evaluates all those candidates seeking a seat on the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas. For an explanation of the ratings used, click [here](#). To read more about the LBA's evaluation procedures, click [here](#).

Todd Brown

Rating: Highly Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 108 "recommended" votes, 22 "not recommended" votes and 77 "no opinion" votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 1999 and served as a Lancaster County Assistant District Attorney from 2000-2015, as the Chief Public Defender of Lancaster County from 2016-2020, and now the candidate serves as the First Assistant District Attorney.

The candidate has significant and notable experience in criminal matters including material trial and negotiation experience from both the prosecution and defense perspective. The candidate's peers and supervisors describe the candidate as smart and capable of handling difficult issues. The candidate received extremely positive feedback on his judicial temperament, as the candidate was described as having tremendous integrity, being fair and even-handed, and demonstrating patience.

The candidate has significant administrative experience from his time as the Chief Public Defender and as a senior member of the District Attorney's office. The candidate has demonstrated community engagement. For these reasons, the Committee highly recommends his candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



Mark Fetterman

Rating: Not Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 59 “recommended” votes, 73 “not recommended” votes and 75 “no opinion” votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 1995 and initially began his career as a sole practitioner until 1997 when he became an Assistant Public Defender. In 1999, the candidate became a Lancaster County Assistant District Attorney and the candidate has worked in that capacity since then.

The candidate has significant criminal trial experience and is assigned very difficult matters (including homicides) regularly. The candidate’s peers and supervisors describe the candidate as smart and a very good trial attorney, both in the courtroom and with written motions, with an excellent understanding of the rules of evidence. The Committee did not have questions about the candidate’s professional credentials. By all accounts, the candidate has the professional experience to be an excellent judge.

There were material concerns expressed about the candidate’s demeanor, specifically his temper and his decorum. The Committee believes those concerns were reflected in the survey results of the Association’s members. Based on the information available to the Committee at this time, the Committee believes that the candidate does not possess the judicial temperament to appropriately discharge the duties of a member of the bench. For these reasons, the Committee does not recommend his candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



Edward Kennett

Rating: Highly Recommended

The candidate fully participated in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 120 “recommended” votes, 15 “not recommended” votes and 72 “no opinion” votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 1993 and initially began his career as an Assistant District Attorney. Since that time the candidate has worked for civil law firms focused on plaintiff’s representation.

The candidate has significant litigation and trial experience having tried over 100 cases in front of a jury. The candidate’s peers and supervisors describe the candidate as intelligent and hard-working, as well as being equally adept at written and oral advocacy. The candidate is held in very high regard by his peers, as demonstrated by the Association survey results. The candidate is also described as trustworthy, fair and open-minded. The candidate’s demeanor is well-suited to handle the demands placed upon a member of the bench. The candidate has a significant amount of professional and community service. Based upon his courtroom experience in criminal and civil matters, along with his peer reviews and temperament, the candidate meets or exceeds all desired criteria. For these reasons, the Committee highly recommends his candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



The Honorable Karen L. Maisano

Rating: Highly Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 95 “recommended” votes, 28 “not recommended” votes and 86 “no opinion” votes.

While the candidate is currently serving as a judge, she is not up for retention because she was appointed to the bench. Because of this, the candidate was evaluated using the same highly recommended, recommended, and not recommended as the other candidates seeking election for the first time.

The candidate passed the bar in 2002 and initially began her career representing individuals who were charged with committing crimes. The candidate began working in the District Attorney’s office thereafter for approximately 18 years until being appointed to the Lancaster Court of Common Pleas bench in July of 2022.

The candidate had significant trial experience before becoming a judge. The candidate was considered a statewide authority on Megan’s Law, with particularly high marks for assisting victims of sexual assault and child abuse. The candidate’s skill set has translated very well to her present position. The candidate is described as diligent and smart, and practitioners give her high marks for managing the courtroom in an even-handed manner. The candidate is described as having a high degree of integrity, and litigants can trust what the candidate says. The candidate has a demonstrated ability to do the job well. The candidate is a credit to the bench and she would be well-suited to remain in that position. For these reasons, the Committee highly recommends her candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



Shawn McLaughlin

Rating: Not Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 23 “recommended” votes, 66 “not recommended” votes and 114 “no opinion” votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 1991 and has been a civil law practitioner since that date. The candidate has had a varied practice, including personal injury, social security disability, employment law and general civil litigation. It is believed that the majority of the candidate’s experience is representing plaintiffs in personal injury litigation.

The candidate has a limited number of jury trials in his career, although that is not necessarily atypical for a civil practitioner. Some concerns were raised about the candidate’s knowledge of motion practice and how he delegated work on existing matters.

In his practice, the candidate conducts himself with professionalism and integrity, and the candidate is considered trustworthy and honest. No concerns were raised about the candidate’s judicial demeanor.

The results of the Association survey were also a factor in the candidate’s rating. Apart from the balance of recommended and not recommended votes, the candidate has more “no opinion” votes than any other candidate, suggesting he is less known among his peers. There is a perception that the candidate does not have significant involvement in the Lancaster County community. For these reasons, the Committee does not recommend his candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



Randall Miller

Rating: Highly Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 78 “recommended” votes, 41 “not recommended” votes and 89 “no opinion” votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 1991. The candidate has significant criminal experience serving as both an Assistant District Attorney and a criminal defense attorney. From 2020 to the present, the candidate has served as the Magisterial District Judge for District 02-3-09, which includes Elizabethtown Borough and Mount Joy Township.

The candidate has noteworthy experience with both criminal and civil jury trials (although the candidate’s trial experience is much more significant in criminal matters). The candidate is described as a very good trial lawyer and trustworthy. The candidate is considered a hard worker with the mental acuity to handle complex matters. The candidate has demonstrated a good judicial temperament and allows parties appearing in front of him in Magisterial District Court to present their case. For these reasons, the Committee highly recommends his candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



Christina Parsons

Rating: Not Recommended

The candidate did not participate in the peer review process prior to this summary being prepared.

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 31 “recommended” votes, 94 “not recommended” votes and 79 “no opinion” votes.

The candidate passed the bar in 2006. The candidate worked for a large firm for a short period of time after passing the bar examination. For the last 13 years, the candidate has served as a Court-Appointed Dependency Hearing Officer. To the best of the Committee’s knowledge, the candidate did not actively practice law during the candidate’s time as a Dependency Hearing Officer. Based on the information available to the Committee, the candidate has very limited experience in a courtroom.

The candidate received positive feedback in her role as a Dependency Hearing Officer. The candidate was described as respectful and trustworthy with a balanced demeanor. No concerns were raised about the candidate’s temperament.

There were concerns articulated with the candidate’s legal experience. The Committee does not believe that the candidate’s tenure as a Court-Appointed Dependency Hearing Officer qualifies as “trial or other comparable experience” under the rating criteria for judicial candidates because it does not regularly require the resolution of evidentiary matters or involve significant legal analysis. An additional concern about this candidate is that the candidate works a very limited schedule as a Dependency Hearing Officer, roughly the equivalent of two to three business days per month. The time demands necessary to serve on the bench are far in excess of the amount of time presently being devoted by the candidate. For these reasons, the Committee does not recommend her candidacy for the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.



The Honorable Merrill M. Spahn, Jr. (retention)

Rating: Recommended

The Lancaster Bar Association survey yielded the following results: 169 “recommended” votes, 11 “not recommended” votes and 31 “no opinion” votes. Under the Committee’s bylaws, candidates for retention are only eligible to receive a rating of “recommended” or “not recommended;” retention candidates are not eligible to receive “highly recommended.”

Having served capably as a member of the Court of Common Pleas of Lancaster County for the past ten years, the candidate is highly regarded as a hardworking, fair-minded and extremely capable jurist. The candidate has authored well-written opinions that are understandable and thoroughly researched. Practitioners believe the candidate has struck an excellent balance between maintaining order in the courtroom while allowing attorneys to present their cases. The candidate has earned the respect of both litigants and lawyers during the candidate’s time on the bench, and the Committee recommends his retention as a judge of the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas.