



Judicial Selection in Illinois

**Hon. Bonnie M. Wheaton, Circuit Judge
For the League of Women Voters**

Requirements to be a Judge:

1. Attorney licensed in Illinois
2. Resident of jurisdiction (DuPage County)



Two types of Judges:

- Circuit Judges

- Must run in a party primary (500 signatures) or as an independent (18,500 signatures!)
- Must be elected in general election
- 6 year term, then run for retention (yes/no) - need 60% Yes votes
- Salary of \$202,900
- Usually have “better” calls
- 15 Circuit Judges in DuPage - 6 women, 9 men
- **The 15 Circuit Judges select 31 Associate Judges!**



- **Associate Judges**

- Appointed by majority vote of Circuit Judges
- 4 year term; must be reappointed by 60% vote of Circuit Judges
- Salary \$194,200
- Usually less desirable calls (traffic, eviction, misdemeanors, plus bond court and marriages)
- 31 Associate Judges in DuPage - 6 women, 25 men (2 POC)



Types of Cases

- Criminal and traffic - 20 judges
 - Felony (serious crimes) - 7 judges
 - Misdemeanor (minor crimes and DUI) - 9 judges
 - Traffic - 4 judges
- Domestic Relations - 10 judges
 - Divorce, Legal Separation
 - Paternity and Custody
 - Juvenile (includes abuse and neglect)



- Law - 8 judges
 - Major Civil Suits (over \$50,000)
 - Arbitration
 - Small Claims
- Chancery - 6 judges
 - Cases seeking non-monetary damages (e.g. injunctions, declaratory judgments, mortgage and lien foreclosures)
 - Evictions
 - Civil forfeitures, plus lots of other types
- Chief Judge



Why are judicial elections so important?

2/3 of DuPage Judges are selected by the Circuit Judges (“merit selection”)

The 15 Circuit Judges are elected by YOU!

The Circuit Judges usually stay on the bench until retirement.



4 of 15 Circuit Judgeships are on the ballot in March and November

Two Circuit Judges retired (appointments for term balance) (Sutter and Anderson vacancies)

One Circuit Judge announced he would not seek retention in 2020 (open seat) (Bakalis vacancy)

One Circuit Judge was removed from the bench (appointment for term balance) (O'Shea vacancy)

EACH VACANCY IS A SEPARATE RACE!



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- YOU CAN VOTE FOR REPUBLICANS OR DEMOCRATS BUT NOT BOTH!
- EACH VACANCY IS A SEPARATE RACE! There are 13 candidates but only 1 contested Republican race and only 2 contested Democrat races.
- FIRST DECIDE WHICH PARTY BALLOT YOU WANT, THEN LOOK AT THE CONTESTED VACANCIES



Bakalis Vacancy

Democrat

- Margaret “Peggy” O’Connell



Republican

- James F. McCluskey



O'Shea Vacancy

Democrat

- Azam Nizamuddin



- David Guy Stevens



Republican

- Greg Abbott



- Richard D. Felice



- John Joseph Pcolinski, Jr.



- Richard J. "Rick" Veenstra



Anderson Vacancy

Democrat

- Jeffrey M. Jacobson



Republican

- Monique O'Toole



Sutter Vacancy

Democrat

- Jill Otte



- Alice Wilson



Republican

- Ann Celine Walsh



How should I decide?



Where to get information

- Look at candidate websites
- Attend a candidate forum
- Illinois State Bar Assn. attorney polls
- DCBA Judiciary Committee ratings for Associate Judge applicants
- Ask a lawyer or judge friend
- Read newspaper candidate questionnaires
- Keep your eyes open- the candidates are everywhere!





VOTE.
YOUR
VOICE
MATTERS.