

It's a horse race for new circuit seats

Judge-watchers probe 'contenders'



JUDITH D. DORAN
Questions

1. How many hours per week do you believe the public has a right to expect a judge to spend on the job in the courthouse?

2a. What is your attitude toward tardiness and non-appearance of lawyers when they are scheduled to appear in court?

2b. In this connection, would you handle the granting of continuances with more restraint than is the custom in the courthouse today?

3. Respond to one of these two questions:

What practical and specific areas do you have for improving the flow of work through the circuit court?

or

What do you think qualifies you (besides your license to practice law) to sit as an Oakland County circuit court judge?

Answers

ROBERT C. ANDERSON

1. With the limited exceptions as set forth in your question, I feel that the public is entitled to have a judge present, available and working on the job in the courthouse during court hours—be it 8:30 to 5—or whatever.

Since my election to the 51st District Court in 1972, it has been my policy to be on the bench, ready for hearings as close to 9 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. as possible. If I am not on the bench I am always available in my office to conduct matters concerning the court with attorneys, the staff and the public.

2a. I make every effort to open court on time, and I feel that attorneys should make the same effort. I do recognize that with all the courts in this area there are bound to be conflicts, but these can and should be worked out ahead of time. I can see very little excuse for non-appearance or tardiness without notice to the court.

2b. I have not practiced law in the circuit court since 1972, and I can not tell you today's custom. I can tell you what my custom is, and I am sure it will be my custom and practice in the circuit court.

3. My education, my training, my 26 years of legal and judicial experience and my desire to serve the citizens of Oakland County.

JUDITH D. DORAN

1. A judge should work at least a full eight-hour day.

2a. The efficiencies of court procedure requires the timely participation of the judge, two attorneys (generally and their respective clients). If any of these participants fail to appear or are tardy the whole system grinds to a halt. Therefore, promptness by the attorneys as well as the judge is necessary.

2b. Continuances should only be granted in those instances where good cause is shown and, if one side to a lawsuit causes more than one delay of proceedings, the additional costs incurred by the innocent party should be paid out of the pocket of the guilty party.

3. If I may, I would like to answer both questions.

Several obvious practices should be introduced immediately to move the docket including public reporting of each judge's work on a weekly or monthly basis in addition to judicial team work so that cases ready for trial are spun off to any judge who has free court time rather than being limited to the assigned judge.

Besides professional competence, I have demonstrated the leadership ability necessary to meet the challenge facing Oakland Circuit Court.

HILDA GAGE

1. I believe that the public has a right to expect a judge to work in the courthouse at least from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., just like any other county employee. I am not unmindful of the fact that occasionally a judge will have to leave the courthouse for purposes of meetings relative to the judicial position, observing necessary evidence outside of the courthouse, and other matters not contemplated within this question. As an active trial attorney and a judicial candidate, I believe that the necessary amount of time spent in the courthouse is in excess of these minimum expectations.

Sixteen persons will be running in the Aug. 8 primary election for six seats on the Oakland County Circuit Court bench.

Three incumbent judges—Steven N. Andrews, Farrell E. Roberts and Robert Templin—will be running for their own seats unopposed. The remaining 13 candidates are aiming for election to one of three new seats which were recently created by the state legislature.

That 13-person field will drop to six following the primary.

"Putting the right person on the bench in the first place is the best way to insure a good justice system," said Yvonne Atkinson, director of the Court Watchers of Oakland County, an informal group of volunteers acting as judicial watchdogs.

Knowing that most voters cannot

meet and analyze all 13 candidates, Mrs. Atkinson said, the Court Watchers posed a number of questions to the candidates running for election to one of the three newly-created seats.

Their answers appear below. They appear in this form in which they were submitted, except where edited for space.

Those candidates responding

included: Robert C. Anderson, Judith Denney Doran, Hilda Gage, Bernard Kaufman, Bruce H. Keidan, Gene Schnelz and Robert C. Williams.

Candidates not responding were: Stuart Brice, Robert E. Cunningham, Michaels S. Friedman, Albert A. Kramer, Frederick Mester and Mildred A. Vlaich.



ROBERT C. WILLIAMS

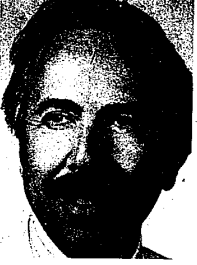
1. A circuit judge should spend a minimum of 40 hours per week on the job in the courthouse. If a judge's caseload requires more work than 40 hours, he should work whatever additional time is necessary to keep his docket up to date.

2. There is no excuse for lawyers who do not appear in court at the time for which a hearing is set. The first time a lawyer was late in my courtroom, I would advise him or her that I expected lawyers to appear promptly. The second time, I would repeat the warning and assess court costs and attorneys fees to the opposing side. The third time, I would hold the lawyer in contempt of court and discipline him accordingly.

3. My prime qualifications for the office of Oakland County Circuit Judge are my industry, education, experience and temperament. I believe that a circuit judge should be in the courtroom trying cases. A judge should not spend his time in chambers with lawyers attempting to settle cases.

As an assistant prosecutor for the last six years, I have gained extensive courtroom experience while appearing in thousands of cases. I am presently Chief of the Appellate Division for the prosecutor's office. In that capacity I am responsible for all post-conviction cases in our office.

I believe that I possess the patience and understanding to assure each litigant the opportunity to present his case. I would attempt to conduct my courtroom in such a manner that each individual, whether he won or lost, would agree that he had received a fair hearing.



BERNARD L. KAUFMAN



BRUCE H. KEIDAN



GENE SCHNELZ

Farmington Observer

SPOTLIGHT

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many of the cases now jamming the courts.

1. Forty (40) hours per week, or more if circumstances dictated is to 2a. Tardiness and non-appearance of lawyers must be dealt with on an individual basis as to reason and past history of the attorney. In the event it is found that the attorney has no adequate reason or has a history of such conduct, court costs should be assessed.

2b. Continuances should be granted for good cause, but not in order to delay final disposition or protect an attorney or his client from willful neglect for failure to prepare.

3. One of the major reasons the new judgeship positions were created is to aid in the backlog of cases in the circuit court. I feel that in addition to this, a more careful scheduling of

trials and hearings should be made to attempt to insure that the scheduled cases will be heard. In the event cases must be placed on spin-off or standby due to the continuance of prior trials, periodic open days should be scheduled in order than an expedient disposition of these matters can be made.

GENE SCHNELZ

1. I believe that being a judge is a fulltime job, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a district judge I have worked many Saturdays and Sundays and been awakened a number of times at 3:30 a.m. relative to search warrants and other important matters. I start my court promptly at 8:30 a.m. and go until 5 p.m. every day. If a matter is in progress at 5 p.m. and can be completed within an hour, it is our policy to stay until completed. My court is one of the busiest district courts in the state and is completely current.

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