

Election 2023: Judge, Commonwealth Court

The Judicial Branch in Pennsylvania has several levels. Most people have contact with courts at the local level, the Magisterial District Courts and the Courts of Common Pleas. If you don't like a decision one of the local judges make, you can turn to the Appellate Courts. Remember, the Appellate Courts are the ones that may have the most effect on your everyday life. In this issue we'll discuss the Commonwealth Court.

What is the Commonwealth Court?

The Commonwealth Court has jurisdiction over administrative and civil public law. For example, if you disagree with your local zoning board and don't like how the local Judge ruled, you can appeal that decision to the Commonwealth Court. The Commonwealth Court also hears appeals regarding Right to Know requests. The Commonwealth Court reviews every case properly brought before it. And once the Commonwealth Court makes a decision, that decision is generally binding on the lower courts. Remember that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court does not have to accept a request to review what the Commonwealth Court decided.¹

There are nine judges on the Commonwealth Court.

The Candidates

Judicial candidates are able to cross-file on both the Democrat and Republican ballots and to obtain signatures from registered voters of both parties to get their name on the ballot. This is because being a judge is considered to be a nonpolitical position. Rule 4.1 of the Code of Judicial Conduct reads, rather than making decisions based on the views or preferences of the electorate, a judge is supposed to make decisions based upon the law and facts of every case. Therefore, judicial candidates must be free from political influence and political pressure.²

This year, there is one seat that will be filled at the election in November. The vacancy on Commonwealth Court was created when former Judge P. Kevin Brobson left the judicial body to join The Pennsylvania Supreme Court last year. The candidates, in alphabetical order, for the Commonwealth Court seat are Megan L. Martin, Bryan S. Neft, Joshua G. Prince and Judge Matthew S. Wolf.

Megan L. Martin

Megan Martin moved to Central Pennsylvania to attend law school and has made it her home for more than 30 years.

- Areas of Legal Expertise
 - 30 Years of Legal Experience
 - Secretary-Parliamentarian and Right to Know Law Appeals Officer for the Senate of Pennsylvania
 - Assistant Counsel for the Office of General Counsel, U.S. Navy
 - Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Public Liaison
 - Special Assistant to the Governor's Office of General Counsel
 - Law Clerk in the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas
 - Professor of Legal Methods, Widener University School of Law
 - Professor of Legal Studies, Harrisburg Area Community College
 - Extensive experience in administrative law
- Service to the Legal Profession
 - Member, Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA)
 - Member, PBA Government Lawyers Committee
 - Member, PBA Administrative Law Section
 - Member, PBA Women in the Profession Commission
 - Co-Chair, Social Awareness Subcommittee of the PBA's Government Lawyers Committee
- Service to the Community
 - Former Member, Board of Directors, YWCA of Greater Harrisburg
 - Former YWCA Domestic Violence Legal Clinic Pro Bono Attorney
 - Volunteer at St. Joseph's School, Good Shepherd School, Girl Scouts Fund Development Committee

¹ Definitions.uslegal.com/c/commonwealth-court

² American Bar Association, Rule 4.1: Political and Campaign Activities of Judges and Judicial Candidates in General, July 15, 2020

Good Things Happen When YOU Vote

- Education
 - J.D., Widener University School of Law
 - B.A., University of Delaware

To learn more about Megan Martin, visit <https://meganmartinforpa.com/>

Bryan S. Neft

Bryan Neft's family settled in Pittsburgh more than 100 years ago. He lives in Mt. Lebanon.

- Areas of Legal Expertise
 - 32 Years of Legal Experience
 - Member, Spilman, Thomas & Battle, PLLC
 - Law Clerk for a Superior Court Judge
 - Municipal law, personal injury, insurance, estate disputes, family law, criminal law, healthcare
 - Argued cases before the Commonwealth, Superior and Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania
 - Ran for an open seat on Superior Court in 2021 but was defeated in the Primary Election
- Service to the Legal Profession
 - Allegheny County Bar Association's Board of Governors. As its president, Bryan championed issues affecting women, people of color and LGBTQ+ members of the legal profession. He promoted changes to the rules of professional conduct to prohibit bias, and was responsible for drafting the ACBA's Code of Professionalism for the Bar Association. Member of Women in the Law Committee, Gender Bias Subcommittee; LGBT Rights Committee; Finance Committee Chair; and, PAC Treasurer
 - Pennsylvania Bar Association, House of Delegates; Co-Chair, Judicial Administration Committee
 - American Bar Association, House of Delegates and member of Commission on IOLTA
- Service to the Community
 - Mt. Lebanon Traffic Board
 - Rivers Club, Board of Governors
 - United Jewish Federation of Pittsburgh
 - Hunger Services Network
- Education
 - J.D., Boston University School of Law
 - B.A., University of Pennsylvania

To learn more about Bryan Neft, visit <https://bryanneft.com/>

Joshua G. Prince

Joshua Prince resides in Alburtus.

- Areas of Legal Expertise
 - The candidate has practiced law since 2009
 - Principal, Civil Rights Defense Firm, P.C.
 - Associate, Prince Law Offices, P.C.
 - Areas of practice include civil rights litigation, administrative law and Second Amendment litigation.
- Service to the Legal Profession
 - Pennsylvania Bar Association
 - Montgomery County Bar Association
- Service to the Community
 - Pottstown Police Athletic League – Past President, Secretary and Board Member
 - Masons
 - Second Amendment Foundation
 - National Rifle Association

Good Things Happen When YOU Vote

- Education
 - J.D., Widener University School of Law
 - B.A., McGill University

To learn more about Joshua Prince, visit <https://www.princeforjustice.com/>

Judge Matthew S. Wolf

- Areas of Legal Expertise
 - Judge Wolf spent 25 years with a civil rights law practice, focused on equity and access to justice
 - Judge Wolf has served on the Philadelphia Municipal Court since 2018. He has adjudicated civil and criminal matters and has served as the Civil Division Supervising Civil Judge.
 - Law clerk to the Honorable Judge Dennis J. Waldron, Section F Criminal District Court, Orleans Parish, Louisiana
- Service to the Legal Profession
 - Pennsylvania Bar Association
 - Philadelphia Bar Association
- Service to the Community
 - Served in the U.S. Army and Pennsylvania National Guard
 - Captain in the Judge Advocate General Corps and Foreign Claims Officer in Iraq
 - First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry
- Education
 - Rutgers Camden School of Law
 - Loyola University School of Law
 - B.S., LeMoyne College

To learn more about Judge Matthew Wolf, visit <https://judgemattwolf.com/>

In Our Opinion

Operation Wildfire believes that the citizens of Pennsylvania deserve a Judge who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench, one who will enter the courtroom without a political agenda, and who will listen to the facts of each case and make a decision consistent with the law. For those reasons, as well as her experience, Operation Wildfire encourages you to vote for Megan L. Martin, Judge, Commonwealth Court.

What's Ahead?

Operation Wildfire reviews the candidates running for the Pennsylvania Superior Court.