

2025 JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed to provide insight about your candidacy and to aid the various committee members in making a more informed choice when casting their endorsement vote. This will be shared with the members of the committees participating in the 2025 Judicial Candidates Zoom Conference and any other Democratic Committee/Committee member that requests copies. Your response is requested no later than: January 20, 2025. Please email your .pdf responses to: committee@mccandlelessdemocrats.org

Name: Julie Capone

Campaign website: juliecapone.com

**1. Have you received a rating from the Allegheny County or Pennsylvania Bar Association? If so, please state the rating and year received.
If not, are you applying for a rating? Please state when your interview is scheduled or why you are not applying for a rating.**

Highly Recommended (November 2024)

2. What are your qualifications to run for a Judicial Seat? What specific accomplishments in your past have qualified you for this?

I'm an experienced trial attorney and litigator. I currently serve as an Assistant District Attorney in Allegheny County, as I have for the last 23 years, though I've recently taken a leave of absence to focus on my campaign. During my tenure in the DA's Office, I've handled hundreds of prosecutions and spent thousands of hours in the courtroom representing and seeking justice for Allegheny County crime victims.

Excluding appeals, I've handled all aspects of prosecution. I've conducted preliminary hearings, litigated countless suppression and other miscellaneous pre- and post-trial motions, drafted briefs and other legal memorandum, and deposed senior witnesses in court and offsite. I've tried hundreds of cases to verdict before judges and juries. In almost all cases I've handled, I was the sole prosecutor.

The difference between being a good judge and a great judge is being able to make fair decisions while being compassionate and showing all litigants you realize whatever reason they

are in court, their case is their whole world and they will be heard. I've had 23 years of on-the-job training for this role and seen how scary the court process is for all involved, whether a witness, victim, accused, a litigant in a divorce, child custody or a civil proceeding. It takes not only professional experience, but also personal experience, which I have. Having been involved in personal experiences as well (please see this detailed in a later response in question #27), I believe my varied experience makes me well-qualified and prepared to make such decisions.

3. Describe the nature of your legal practice since graduating from law school, including the percentage of your practice dedicated to litigation and whether you appeared in court frequently, occasionally, or not at all.

I began my career in the District Attorney's Area Prosecution and General Trial Units. During my 18-month assignment to Area Prosecution, I was assigned to a 3-member prosecution team conducting all preliminary hearings for cases filed before City of Pittsburgh Magistrates. We handled a daily docket averaging 75 cases. I also spent 2 years in the General Trial Unit (now known as the Community Impact Unit) trying and litigating cases in Common Pleas Court. In this capacity, I was assigned an average of 15 cases per day, almost all of which were scheduled as trials. The case types I was assigned included, but weren't limited to, DUI, Aggravated Assault while DUI, Aggravated and Simple Assault, Robbery, Burglary, Theft, Access Device Fraud, Identity Theft, Firearms Possession, and Possession with Intent to Deliver a Controlled Substance.

In 2004, the Elder Abuse Unit was created, which focuses exclusively on prosecution of crimes committed against seniors. I was promoted to this unit, becoming it's first, at the time, it's only prosecutor. I now oversee the unit. I'm responsible for stewarding prosecutions of all crime types, including, but not limited to, Homicide, Attempt Homicide, Aggravated and Simple Assault, Robbery, Rape, Indecent Assault, Terroristic Threats, Neglect of a Care Dependent Person, Burglary, Theft, and Embezzlement.

While I maintain a busy court calendar and appear in court frequently, I train junior prosecutors, legal professionals, and police officers on best practices. Additionally, I'm involved in community outreach aimed at preventing Elder Abuse (and in rare cases, other crimes). In this capacity, I work closely with the District Attorney's Senior Justice Advocates and its civilian network (nicknamed the "Fraud Squad"), the Area Agency on Aging and its Protective Services Division, and other stakeholders. I've presented at many senior fairs, conferences, meetings, and other events to connect seniors with resources and train/educate them on how to recognize and prevent elder abuse and other scams targeting seniors.

4. Why are you running for this office?

I became a lawyer because I wanted to help people. My fondest memories from my youth are of time spent with my grandmother and aunt. I had a special bond, reverence, and connection

with both. But I felt compassion for all seniors. I knew early on that I wanted to help seniors in some capacity. As a result, I worked part-time in a nursing home as a teenager. I learned this line of work is incredibly challenging and emotionally draining. I also felt terrible about the way some of the staff treated the residents. I knew then I wanted to advocate for seniors in some capacity. It changed the trajectory of my career.

When I enrolled at Pitt Law, I decided to focus on elder law. I also participated in the school's Elder Law Clinic, providing free legal counsel to low-income seniors, such as drafting wills, living wills, power of attorneys. As I mentioned above, the District Attorney's Office created the Elder Abuse Unit in 2004. I was so happy to be assigned to this unit and I felt very fortunate to carry on a lifelong passion for helping seniors.

I devoted the rest of my career (over 20 years now) to seeking justice for seniors who suffered physical, financial, sexual abuse or neglect. Of course, being a judge will involve a transition from advocate to an impartial mediator. However, every judge must pivot in this way. I've learned the criminal justice system only works when everyone's doing their job. I appreciate the importance of being an unbiased judge and want to ensure everyone's rights are protected and everyone's treated fairly.

I want to continue my work in public service to the bench and continue with compassion, community support, and making sure everyone is heard, as I have done the past 23 years. I believe I will make a difference, if I'm fortunate enough to be elected to the bench.

5. Have you ever run for or held office? If yes, what office? Why did you leave office?

No.

6. Have you ever been arrested? If yes, list the county and state of arrest, the charge, and the outcome of the case.

No.

7. Have you ever had a Domestic Violence Protection Order or Civil Stalking Protection Order taken out against you? If yes, list the county and state issuing the Order.

No.

8. Do you have any outstanding tax liabilities? Have you ever had any outstanding tax liabilities in the past? If yes, describe them and the outcomes(s).

No.

9. Have you ever had a malpractice claim filed against you? If yes, list the year and detail the complaint.

No.

10. Have you ever had a bar complaint and/or grievance filed against you? If yes, list the Bar Association which handled the matter and the outcome of the matter.

No.

11. Has your law license ever been inactive? If so, why?

No.

12. Has any professional license held by you other than your law license ever lapsed, been denied renewal, suspended, or revoked for any reason? If yes, describe the circumstances and outcome(s).

No.

13. Has your driver's license ever been denied renewal, been suspended, or been canceled because of unpaid tickets or for any other reason? If yes, describe the circumstances and outcome(s).

No.

14. Do you have or have you had any liens or judgments on any property you own? If yes, describe the circumstances and outcome(s).

No.

15. Have you ever sued or been sued in your personal capacity? If yes, describe the circumstances and outcome(s).

No.

16. Have any sexual harassment allegations and/or complaints been levied against you? If so please detail.

No.

17. Please provide your screen/username for all social media accounts, including but not limited to LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

- a. Facebook: Julie Capone (personal) and Capone for Judge (campaign)
- b. Instagram: julscapone (personal) and juliecaponeforjudge (campaign)
- c. LinkedIn: Julie Capone
- d. X: N/A
- e. TikTok: N/A
- f. Other: N/A

18. Please disclose any other matter that may be of significance in your judicial race. Include in your disclosure any information about you that could be used negatively against you or the Democratic Party.

None.

19. Please explain your thoughts on cashless bail? i.e. when is it appropriate and when is it not appropriate?

I oppose the use of cash bail, except in very rare cases. The imposition of cash bail has a disparate impact resulting in higher incarceration rates for those with limited financial resources. Pre-trial incarceration is not meant as punishment. Judges must balance factors that include, but aren't limited to, the likelihood the suspect will reoffend, public safety, and the suspect's presumed innocence and right to be free pending trial. Most times nonmonetary bail conditions, such as mandated drug, alcohol, or mental health treatment, reporting requirements, electronic home monitoring, etc., can be imposed in lieu of pre-trial incarceration. While incarceration without bond is a last resort, it may be appropriate with the most violent offenders.

20. Are you familiar with Senate Bill ("SB") 752 (Expanding Diversion; Focusing Detention and Out-of-Home Placements; Related Juvenile Justice Reforms)? Please explain whether you support the bill and explain your reasoning.

The Code of Judicial Conduct arguably prohibits a judicial candidate from answering questions such as this one. I'll abstain on those grounds.

21. Is a hot dog a sandwich? Please explain your reasoning.

This topic is very worthy of a debate and made me really do a lot of pondering. I believe you can make anything into a sandwich, as long as you have enough bread surrounding it, so yes, it is a sandwich.

Democratic Values

22. Why are you a Democrat? What makes you a Democrat?

I value fairness, equality, accessible government and courts, expansion of healthcare, and strong public schools and education. I believe in building coalition and working together to solve problems. I value compassion and empathy. I support organized labor and workers' rights. I believe in democracy, the protection of basic human rights, and treating everyone with dignity and respect. I believe the Democratic Party embodies these ideals.

23. If you do not receive the Democratic Party Endorsement for this position, will you run against the endorsed candidates?

Being a former Democratic Committee Member myself until recently, I very much respect the endorsement process and am hoping to receive the party's endorsement. If I do not receive it, I will have to evaluate my campaign and make that very difficult decision if that happens.

24. Have you ever run for political office where you ran against an endorsed Democratic candidate? If so, why?

No.

25. Have you ever changed your party affiliation or voted in a primary other than the Democratic Primary? If so, when and why?

No.

26. Have you ever volunteered for a Democratic campaign? If yes, what candidate and what year?

Yes. As I said above, I was a Democratic Committee Member. I resigned recently only because applicable rules prohibit judicial candidates from holding that position during their candidacy. I've volunteered for many local, state, and presidential Democratic campaigns. Most recently I campaigned for Bill Petulla (Democratic State Representative Candidate) and Harris/Walz.

27. What personal experiences have you had that you believe will shape your judicial temperament?

I was the victim of a road rage attack in 2009. The defendant chose to go to trial, despite being offered a withdrawal upon completion of anger management classes. The case dragged on for 2 years and culminated with a jury trial. At the time, I had been an Assistant District Attorney for 8 years, and I thought I was very compassionate and empathetic toward crime victims and

others. However, being placed in the center of litigation (a jury trial nonetheless) gave me a new appreciation for victims and litigants.

Lawyers and people who work in the courts may become desensitized to the intimidating nature of court proceedings. We sometimes take it for granted that people will come to court, testify, and do whatever else is necessary to litigate a matter. However, being in court can be a terrifying and traumatic experience. Having gone through that process personally, I think I now have a better understanding of that and am uniquely compassionate about the impact it has on stakeholders and others involved.

Most people don't want to come to court. Rather, they're compelled to come to court when bad things happen to them. That may be when they're a crime or personal injury victim. And in the case of an accused, they may have made the worst mistake of their life or found themselves wrongly accused. Whether they are a victim or an accused, their case is the most important thing in the world to them, and they may never be in a courtroom again. Of course, not everyone will leave court happy, but it's important the litigants feel they were heard and understand how and why the court rules the way it does.

28. What does it mean to have a commitment to diversity and inclusion? In your personal, professional, or civic life have you demonstrated that commitment? If so, how?

I served on the Allegheny County Bar Association's Judiciary Committee and chaired it in my last year. Amongst other goals, we strived to promote a diverse bench and impressed upon the candidates we interviewed the existence and ramifications of the implicit bias that exists in the criminal justice system. We made this one of our highest priorities. During that time, I was placed on the Judiciary's sub-committee in which the stated mission was to revise the Bar Association's bylaws to advance this goal.

Additionally, I'm a member of the Criminal Litigation Section Committee. We established a sub-committee to address racial disparities in Allegheny County's criminal justice system. We hope the sub-committee's work and our work in the Criminal Division permeates other Allegheny County court divisions and spearheads widespread change throughout the 5th Judicial District.

As a judge, I would promote diversity by appointing attorneys of diverse races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientation, socioeconomic classes, backgrounds generally, etc. to represent indigent parties.

29. Have you previously represented any clients where you had to take a position adverse to any Democratic values or core constituencies (ex. representing an employer during a union busting campaign, representing a white supremacist)? If so, please explain.

No.

30. Have you ever taken a public stance for or against the following? If so, please detail your position at the time of the public statement and where the statement can be found (if published or recorded):

- a. Women's Reproductive Rights**
- b. LGBTQ Rights**
- c. Marriage Equality**
- d. Right to Work Legislation**
- e. Collective Bargaining**
- f. Second Amendment**
- g. Vaccinations or other public health measures**
- h. The validity of any election or election process**

31. If you believe that gender, racial, ethnic, class or other forms of bias can infect the justice system, how will you work to keep your courtroom as bias-free as possible?

It's important to recognize the existence of implicit bias. I know people who have personally experienced implicit bias, and sometimes it comes from the most unlikely sources. Subtle things matter in a big way. I would be vigilant in eradicating implicit bias in my courtroom. I would make sure my staff is trained and educated on the issue. It shouldn't matter what you look like, who you pray to, or who you love—justice should fairly, equally, and impartially administered to all.