

Q & A with Judge Joe Donald, candidate for Wisconsin Supreme Court; answers provided 1/26/16

1. Identify what you believe to be your single most important qualification for serving on the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

I am the most independent, qualified, and experienced candidate running this election. Throughout my twenty years as a judge, which is more judicial experience than my opponents combined, I have presided over cases in every division on the Milwaukee County circuit court. I have demonstrated my independence by applying the law fairly in every case I have presided over, which is why as an appointee of Republican Governor Tommy Thompson, I have earned the support of Democrats like Senator Herb Kohl.

2. Please point to a decision you have written that reveals something relevant about your judicial philosophy, and highlight what that is.

I was deeply involved in the creation and development of the Milwaukee County drug treatment court, and served as that court's first presiding judge. The court breaks the cycle of poverty, crime, and drugs by using a non-adversarial approach to address addictive disease, incorporating inpatient and outpatient treatment. By addressing the abuse of alcohol and other substances, the court reduces recidivism, lowers taxpayer costs, and improves the health and life of abusers, their victims, and their families.

3. Wisconsin's Supreme Court has drawn negative attention for various indicators of discord among its members. Please explain what would do to reduce tensions and promote collegiality on the court.

The negative attention our court has received over the past few years has been detrimental to the court. Our court used to have a national reputation for integrity and fairness, but now our court is in the headlines for all of the wrong reasons. I have demonstrated my ability to work with individuals of all stripes throughout my whole life, and I believe my presence on the Wisconsin Supreme Court will begin to heal some of the divides. I won't belong to any one faction, and I will never predetermine a case before any of the facts are heard. I will seek consensus on the court and work towards decisions that are fair and just.

4. Name a single Wisconsin Supreme Court justice, past or present, whom you admire, and tell why.

I admire Justice Patrick Crooks for his independence and ability to bridge divides on the court. If we want to reduce the discord among the justices, we need to elect more independent justices like Patrick Crooks.

5. Do you believe that Wisconsin's Supreme Court is, as a matter of law, subject to the state's public records and open meetings laws?

I believe it should but the current state of the law says otherwise and generally it does not apply to the court.