

**Kentucky  
Candidate  
Information  
Survey**



**JUDICIAL SURVEY 2020**

Each judicial candidate pledges to keep an open mind and carry out their adjudicative duties faithfully and impartially if elected.  
Each candidate also recognizes their overarching obligation to apply and uphold the law, without regard to his or her personal views.

No statement should be interpreted as a pledge, promise, or commitment in connection with any case, controversy, or issue likely to come before the court.



**KY Family Court  
Dist. 42, Div. 2**

**Ryan Yates**  
*www.YatesForJudge.com*

**CHOSE NOT TO  
PARTICIPATE:  
Stephanie Perlow**

<b>Education</b>	Undergraduate: University of Memphis Juris Doctorate: Southern Illinois University
<b>Current Occupation</b>	Attorney, Yates Law Office, Benton, KY
<b>Family</b>	I have been married for over 29 years and we have four sons and one daughter.
<b>Legal Background / Experience</b>	I worked as a firefighter-paramedic for 17 years before entering the law profession. I have been in private practice since 2006 serving clients in Western Kentucky in areas of family law, civil law, criminal law, and bankruptcy.
<b>What do you consider the greatest accomplishment of your legal career? Why?</b> (50 words or less)	My greatest accomplishment in my legal career is the development of lasting relationships with clients and among my colleagues. I have always worked to maintain a reputation as an aggressive but compassionate attorney. My motto is "Advocacy with Understanding".
<b>To what extent have you practiced in the area of criminal law? Family law? Complex civil litigation?</b> (50 words or less)	I have practiced law for 14 years. Over half of the cases I have worked have been cases which fall under the jurisdiction of the Family Court. These include adoptions, divorces, child support & custody issues and dependency/neglect/abuse cases.
<b>What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in the past?</b> (50 words or less)	Starting in 1990, I became a volunteer firefighter, serving my community. I have also served as a little league sports coach, high school football announcer, and sports booster president. I am active in my church and served as a volunteer legal educator teaching H.S. seniors about personal finance.

By sharing how each candidate describes themselves, their qualifications, and judicial philosophy, the KCIS Judicial Survey is bringing light to the area voters are often least informed about. Thus, improving 1) voter knowledge; 2) voter participation; and 3) the quality of the democratic process.

KCIS is a non-partisan project of the Family Trust Foundation of Kentucky.

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**What are the major influences in your life? Why?**  
(50 words or less)

The major influence in my life is my relationship with Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible. Secondly, my wife has been my strongest encourager and a positive influence on my life.

**CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:**

Stephanie Perlow

**Are there any specific types of cases in which you know now you would find it necessary to recuse yourself?**  
(50 words or less)

Only those involving family or past clients. My goal is to be above any appearance of impropriety in my decisions.

**In the last 10 years, which of the following organizations have you been a member, contributed money, volunteered time, been employed by, been endorsed by for a campaign, received money from for a campaign, or had any other affiliation?**

Chamber of Commerce  
Hardin Baptist Church

**Some judges practice a philosophy of restraint, believing that judges must interpret the law strictly rather than seek to make new laws. Others develop a philosophy of activism, using the bench to enact social and political change. Please explain your approach.**  
(50 words or less)

I believe in judicial restraint. The laws are crafted by the legislature and it is not a judge's responsibility to change them.

**Some judges believe that courts should read the Constitution expansively and should not limit themselves to what is explicitly stated. Others believe the courts should not reinterpret the Constitution. Please explain your approach.**  
(50 words or less)

I believe in strict interpretation of the Constitution.

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**Some judges believe that courts should interpret the Constitution as the framers intended. Others believe that the Constitution must grow and adapt to new circumstances. Please explain your approach.**  
(50 words or less)

I believe the Constitution already address new circumstances and should be applied strictly. If a wider interpretation is warranted, then an amendment would be the appropriate avenue for change.

**CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:**  
Stephanie Perlow

**What is your general judicial philosophy?**  
(75 words or less)

Above all else, when a person enters a courtroom, they should know that the decision to be rendered will not be based on bias, preconceived notions, secret allegiances, or any other influence other than the application of the law to the facts presented.

**Which of the current/recent Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court MOST reflects your judicial philosophy and why? Which LEAST reflects it and why?**  
(50 words or less)

Justice Scalia's views of clear lines of separation among the three branches of government most reflects my judicial philosophy because it maintains the "checks & balances" required to maintain order in our government. I reject Justice Breyer's consideration of the consequences of potential interpretations in his decision-making.

**What do you see as the most important issue facing Kentucky's judiciary?**  
(50 words or less)

The most important issue facing Kentucky's judiciary is preconceptions and a lack of empathy. Our Commonwealth has a diverse population and while the law should not succumb to outside influences, judges should try to view matters through various lenses to get a clearer picture of the case.

**What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?**  
(50 words or less)

The greatest obstacle to justice is political influence. Despite judicial seats being "non-partisan", vacancies are filled by the Governor and elections are rooted in political parties. These connections often survive beyond elections and can influence decisions from the bench.

**What steps will you take as a judge to ensure that the rule of law is uniformly applied without passion or prejudice?**  
(50 words or less)

The first step is to recognize that there will be cases necessitating recusal. But for those that do not, it is imperative to be consciously aware of potential passions and prejudices so to not fall blindly into their jaws.

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<p><b>While serving on the bench, do you believe you have a role in bringing important legal or judicial issues before the public or the legislature? Why or why not? What should your role be?</b> (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Judges have the unique role of taking what the legislature has thoughtfully crafted and applying it to a variety of circumstances. There will be times when this application identifies issues not considered in the drafting of the law. These need to be conveyed to the legislature.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:</b></p> <p>Stephanie Perlow</p> </div>
<p><b>What makes you the best qualified candidate for this position?</b> (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Before my 16 years practicing law, I served my community for 17 years as a firefighter and paramedic. I have lived a life outside of the legal realm and have an understanding that will provide a unique perspective from the bench.</p>	
<p><b>Is there anything else you would like the voter to know?</b> (50 words or less)</p>	<p>I have pledged to run a campaign that honors God, my family, and my community. If elected, I will continue that pledge in my service as Family Court Judge.</p>	

**Overview of Kentucky's Court System**

Supreme Court

**Basic Info:** The Supreme Court is the state court of last resort and the final interpreter of Kentucky law. Seven justices sit on the Supreme Court and all seven justices rule on appeals before the court.

**Cases Handled:** Appeals involving the death penalty, life imprisonment or imprisonment for 20 years or more go directly from Circuit Court to the Supreme Court. All other appeals must first be heard by the Court of Appeals, except those so exceptional that the Supreme Court will grant a request to bypass the Court of Appeals.

**Term:** Supreme Court justices serve eight-year terms.



Court of Appeals

**Basic Info:** Fourteen judges, two elected from each of the seven appellate districts, serve on the Court of Appeals and are divided into panels of three to review and decide cases, with the majority deciding the outcome.

**Cases Handled:** With a few exceptions, most cases appealed from Circuit Court go to the Court of Appeals. The case is not retried at the appeals level. Instead, the original trial record is reviewed, with attorneys presenting the legal issues to the court for a decision.

**Term:** Court of Appeals judges serve eight-year terms.



Circuit Courts

**Note:** Family Court is a division of Circuit Court that hears only cases involving families and children.

**Cases Handled:** Can hear all types of cases unless the General Assembly has given exclusive jurisdiction of particular kinds of cases to another court to handle, such as District Court. Circuit Court hears civil matters involving more than \$5,000, capital offenses and felonies, divorces, adoptions, termination of parental rights, land dispute title problems and contested probates of will. It also has the power to issue injunctions and writs of prohibition and mandamus to compel or prohibit acts, and to hear appeals from District Court and administrative agencies.

**Term:** Circuit judges serve eight-year terms.



District Courts

**Cases Handled:** Hears juvenile matters, city and county ordinances, traffic offenses, probates of will, felony preliminary hearings, civil cases involving \$5,000 or less, guardianship, conservatorship, voluntary or involuntary commitment, child abuse and neglect, and domestic violence.

**Term:** District judges serve four-year terms.