



Kentucky Candidate
Information Survey

JUDICIAL SURVEY
2020

KY Family Court

District 37, Div. 2

1.


Each judicial candidate pledges to keep an open mind and carry out their adjudicative duties faithfully and impartially if elected.

2.

Each candidate also recognizes their overarching obligation to apply and uphold the law, without regard to his or her personal views.

3.

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.

PAGE 1 of 7	 <p>Jeniffer Neice <i>facebook.com/Jeniffer4Judge</i></p>	Gary Conn	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p>CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:</p> <p>Derrick Willis</p> </div>
Education	I am a graduate of Elliott County High School, Morehead State University and University of Louisville Brandies School of Law.	B.A. Degree-University of Kentucky J.D. Degree-University of Kentucky Law School	
Current Occupation	I currently focus my career on representing families and children in juvenile court and custody proceedings.	Asst. Commonwealth Attorney-32nd Judicial Circuit	
Family	My husband, Lacy, and I live in Elliott County with our two daughters, Ayla and Katie. My parents are Joe Barker and Katrina Barker McDavid.	My wife is Nancy Conn, we have been married 29 years. Between us we have four children and five grandchildren.	
Legal Background / Experience	I began practicing law in Family Court as a prosecutor for neglect and abuse cases where I discovered my passion for protecting those who are most vulnerable in our court system. My career has evolved over the past decade so that I primarily represent children as a Guardian ad Litem.	52 years of law practice, within those years, I was Domestic Relations Commissioner for 37th Circuit for 13 years, Master Commissioner for 17 years, Commonwealth Attorney-37th Circuit 2010-2013, Asst. Commonwealth Attorney-37th Circuit 2007-2008 and Asst. Commonwealth Attorney-32nd Circuit 2013-present.	



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Jeniffer Neice facebook.com/Jeniffer4Judge

Gary Conn

What do you consider the greatest accomplishment of your legal career? Why? (50 words or less)

The greatest accomplishment of my legal career is in the relationships I have built, not only with those who serve the families of our community, but with the children I represent. There is no accomplishment in Court that compares to a hug and a sincere thank you.

My work as Domestic Relations Commissioner was always gratifying along with helping hundreds of clients obtain their Social Security Benefits. In the last 10 years, i am proud of my work as a prosecutor in two different Circuits.

CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE: Derrick Willis

To what extent have you practiced in the area of criminal law? Family law? Complex civil litigation? (50 words or less)

I have experience with many areas of the law both civil and criminal, however, my focus is family law. I have appeared regularly before the Family Court in Carter, Elliott and Morgan Counties for 13 years handling all aspects of family law including: adoption, domestic violence, neglect and custody cases.

Criminal Law-52 years, both defense and prosecution. Family Law-44 years. Civil Litigation-Plaintiff's work 44 years.

What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in the past? (50 words or less)

I was previously the President of the Carter County Bar Association and I am the current treasurer. I have served as a volunteer and treasurer for the Lakeside Elementary PTCO. I am also frequent volunteer face painter for various schools and community groups.

Lions Club member, Teen Court mentor, Tourism Commission-legal adviser, Meals on Wheels-delivery

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

I grew up watching my mom, Katrina Barker McDavid, pursue her dreams by first becoming a nurse, then a nurse practitioner while being a wonderful mother to two children. She sets an excellent example to this day. I will forever strive to be as kind and compassionate as my Mom.

My parents taught me to respect everyone and treat everyone fairly. I respect the law and those who enforce it. My wife, Nancy, is a great influence. I have never stopped learning, everyday brings a new challenge.



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Jeniffer Neice

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Gary Conn

Are there any specific types of cases in which you know now you would find it necessary to recuse yourself?

(50 words or less)

I am fully prepared to handle all types of cases that come before the Family Court.

Any case which involves a relative of mine or even a close friend would require me to recuse. Of course, any case in which I have a personal or financial interest in would require me to recuse.

CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:

Derrick Willis

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?

(50 words or less)

Candidate Chose Not to Respond

Legal Services Corporation

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)

Many of the laws in Family Court are based in the Court's discretion. There is no jury, the judge is the finder of fact. I believe that it is important to apply the law as written, and most importantly, to do so fairly and consistently.

My belief is that Family Court Judges must follow the law in every case. Family Court is not the place to actively pursue social or political change.



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Gary Conn

**CHOSE NOT TO
PARTICIPATE:**

Derrick Willis

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)

Family Court does not typically focus on Constitutional interpretation.

My approach would be to let Supreme Court Justices interpret the Constitution, even though, I might not agree with the interpretation. I would follow the law as interpreted by the higher Courts.

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)

Family Court does not typically focus on Constitutional interpretation.

(This is the same question as No. 12) My answer would be the same.

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

My philosophy for Family Court is simple: each child and each family is important to our community. When a child is endangered or a family separates, the Family Court steps in to serve that family. The answer is to not only to protect those who need it, but to find solutions to allow families to stay strong and connected, no matter how they are shaped. All of us need loving and supportive families.

1. Fairness in every case
2. Respect for all parties, everyone is entitled to have their case heard carefully and without bias.
3. Timely decisions, people should not have to wait for a decision to be made.



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Gary Conn

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)

It is rare that I fully agree or fully disagree with an individual judicial philosophy.

1. Chief Justice Roberts comes close to my judicial philosophy
2. Justice Clarence Thomas is the least likely to reflect my thinking.

CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE:
Derrick Willis

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

The most important issue facing the judiciary, and all of us, is the the safety of our children, especially those in foster care. Any child without a family network is vulnerable to the world.

Locally the case loads in the area are oppressive, state-wide, judges are under paid and overworked. A great deal of the problem can be attributed to drugs and the opioid epidemic.

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

During the pandemic a lack of internet can be alienating from the system for some. Simply walking in and asking for assistance is off the table, hearings are frequently held online and some people are disadvantaged by not being familiar with technology.

The greatest obstacle to justice in the criminal justice system, in particular the department of corrections. Prosecutors do their jobs only to see the State releasing dangerous criminals too soon.

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)

I was raised to do any job correctly or not to do it at all. It is my own ethics and love of what the family court does for the community that would make it essential for me to apply the law fairly without passion or prejudice.

Since I served as Domestic Relations Commissioner for 13 years, I am familiar with judicial ethics requirements. I followed those ethical requirements before and I will certainly do it again.



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Gary Conn

**CHOSE NOT TO
PARTICIPATE:**

Derrick Willis

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?

(50 words or less)

While serving on the bench, it would not be my intention to bring issues before the public as most cases should be handled discreetly, if not confidentially. However, if I were to see or suspect systematic problems with the safety of our children I will address them immediately and publicly.

Of course, any problems with the legal should always be brought to the attention of the legislature.

What makes you the best qualified candidate for this position?

(50 words or less)

I know that each "case" is a family, and that each decision determines how that family is shaped and how people actually live on a daily basis. There is nothing more important. I have the experience, compassion and integrity necessary for this position.

Experience.

Is there anything else you would like the voter to know?

(50 words or less)

If you don't know me personally, I bet you know someone who does. I've been a fixture at court in all three counties for 13 years. I hope you will ask around about my work ethic, my integrity and my reputation to form your opinion and then cast your vote!

If you want a Judge that is fair and unbiased and who will work tirelessly on your behalf, I ask that you vote for me.

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.

www.votekentucky.us



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Survey responses for additional judicial
and legislative races are available at

www.votekentucky.us

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.