



**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

<p>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.</p>		<p>KY Supreme Court Dist. 7</p>	
<p>Education</p>	<p>Robert "Bob" Conley <i>ConleyForSupremeCourt.com</i></p>	<p>Chris Harris <i>www.chrisharris.com</i></p>	
<p>Current Occupation</p>	<p>Bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky in 1981 before graduating Salmon P. Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University in 1984.</p>	<p>University of Kentucky (1993) – B.S. Accounting, Northern Kentucky University, Chase College of Law (1996) – Juris Doctor</p>	
<p>Family</p>	<p>Circuit Judge – 20th Circuit (Greenup & Lewis Counties)</p>	<p>I have been a practicing attorney for the past 24 years and currently serve as State Representative for the 93rd District, representing Pike and Martin Counties in the Kentucky House of Representatives</p>	
<p>Legal Background / Experience</p>	<p>Married to the late Melanie Stephens Conley for 28 years and father of Katie and Brian.</p>	<p>I have been married to my wife Leslie for 24 years and together we have 3 children, Corbin (age 21), Wilson (age 19) and Emma (age 15).</p>	
<p>What do you consider the greatest accomplishment of your legal career? Why? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Ten years of practicing law followed by 25 years as a trail Judge (District Judge for 12 years and Circuit Judge for the past 13 years).</p>	<p>I'm a former prosecutor who has been practicing law for nearly 25 years. I've fought for justice in court rooms across Kentucky at every level and I'm the only candidate in this race to have successfully argued a case before the Kentucky Supreme Court. I have more courtroom experience as a practicing attorney than both of my opponents combined.</p>	
<p>To what extent have you practiced in the area of criminal law? Family law? Complex civil litigation? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>My greatest accomplishment has been serving as a Circuit and District Court Judge for the people of Greenup and Lewis Counties. The confidence that my community has placed in me through these positions is humbling.</p>	<p>One of the legal accomplishments of which I am most proud is representing my community, pro-bono, before the Ky PSC, to compel a local utility to provide waste water service to homes and businesses in need. I have also worked pro-bono, behind the scenes, on a number of cases involving Kentucky's Open Records Act.</p>	
<p>What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in the past? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Prior to joining the bench, I served as a civil defense attorney in the private sector.</p>	<p>I have more experience practicing a wide variety of law, including complex civil litigation, at every level, in both state and federal court than both of my opponents combined. It is this perspective and legal experience that uniquely prepares me to serve as a Justice on the Kentucky Supreme Court.</p>	
<p>What forms of voluntary professional and community service have you been involved with in the past? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Longtime member of Bridges Christian Church in Russell where I've served in many roles including Elder, Deacon, Sunday School Teacher, and Bible Study Leader. I've been active in youth sports as a coach in baseball, softball, football, and soccer in the Ashland area.</p>	<p>In addition to the pro-bono work I mentioned above, I have served as President of my local Kiwanis Club and provided additional miscellaneous pro-bono legal representation for the poor, and working poor, over the course of my legal career. I have donated my time, services and resources to numerous charitable and religious organizations.</p>	

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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<p>What are the major influences in your life? Why? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>Major influences in my life have been leaders of faith in my church and community who have helped shaped me into the person I am today.</p>	<p>In addition to my faith, I consider my family and community as my greatest influences. Growing up in a small town with close family and friends, I value my reputation and focus in being a good example for others.</p>	
<p>Are there any specific types of cases in which you know now you would find it necessary to recuse yourself? (50 words or less)</p>	<p>No.</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<p>Kentucky Right to Life</p>	<p>AFL-CIO NRA – National Rifle Association Appalachian Pregnancy Care Center Places of Worship – multiple</p>	
<p>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)</p>	<p>As I've done on the Circuit and District Court Levels, my rulings will always focus on the law and upholding our Constitution and Bill of Rights. I don't believe in legislating from the bench.</p>	<p>The constitution is my guiding principle. The people of the 7th District can trust me to defend the constitution and apply the law fairly and equally. And, I will always conduct myself with integrity and in a manner that brings honor to the Court and the people I serve.</p>	
<p>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)</p>	<p>The Constitution should not be reinterpreted.</p>	<p>I believe the constitution should be the guiding cornerstone for every judge</p>	

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Robert "Bob" Conley
ConleyForSupremeCourt.com

**KY Supreme Court
Dist. 7**



Chris Harris
www.chrisharrisky.com

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)

The Constitution should only be interpreted as the framers intended.

I believe a judge should always interpret the Constitution as the framers intended to the best of his or her ability.

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

My philosophy will always be on following the law, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.

Unfortunately, judges with conservative judicial philosophies as well as those with liberal philosophies, have interpreted the Constitution to further their own personal beliefs. That is wrong. I have a moderate judicial philosophy. I believe a judge should apply the law fairly and leave their personal beliefs outside the courtroom.

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)

Candidate Chose Not to Respond

I don't know that there is one justice who most or least reflects my judicial philosophy. I find agreement with some of former Justice Antonie Scalia's opinions as I also find disagreement with some of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's opinions and vice-versa

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

The biggest issue facing our nation's judiciary is the balancing of Constitutional rights and social well-being.

Judicial integrity. The people of Kentucky deserve a Supreme Court Justice with INTEGRITY! They deserve a Justice who treats people without money and influence the same as he treats the special corporate interests and campaign donors who have pending business before the court.

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

Public opinion. The right decision under the law doesn't always agree with the public's opinion.

The greatest obstacles to justice in Kentucky are special interest money's influence on public opinion and elections. I would also include the public's lack of access to the courts as a significant obstacle to justice in Kentucky.

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)

Regardless of the parties involved in a case, the judge's rulings should be fair, consistent, and based upon the law and prior case law on point. It is the legislature that makes law changes in accordance with social ideals, as long as they don't conflict with the Constitution.

I will be a Justice who fairly and compassionately applies the law to every person, group or entity that comes before the Court. I will listen to every side of every issue and make my rulings based upon an informed, fair and just interpretation of the law.

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KY Supreme Court

Dist. 7

Robert "Bob" Conley



Chris Harris

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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)

Candidate Chose Not to Respond

Other than issues relating to judicial integrity, accountability and administration, I do not believe it to be the role of a Supreme Court Justice to bring issues before the public or the legislature. A Supreme Court Justice's role should be to interpret and apply the law and constitution as they are written.

What makes you the best qualified candidate for this position?
(50 words or less)

Given that I have served at the District and Circuit Levels, I have extensive experience as a trial judge, something critical for our appellate court systems.

I have devoted my legal career to fighting, in courtrooms across Kentucky, at every level, including the Supreme Court, for justice on behalf of working people. No other candidate has that experience or record. A Supreme Court Justice should hold himself, and be held by others, to the highest ethical standards.

Is there anything else you would like the voter to know?
(50 words or less)

I believe that every life has value and every person matters. I would appreciate the supports of voters in the 7th Supreme Court District in the June 23rd Primary Election.

Throughout my career, I have fought for justice and to make government more accountable and transparent to the people it serves. As a Supreme Court Justice, I will continue that legacy and always conduct myself in a manner that brings honor to the Court and the people I serve.

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.