

## **Brett Blomme - Judicial candidate questions**

1. What judicial philosophy will you bring to the court and what in your life led you to that philosophy?

**I view the constitution as a living, breathing document. The framers of the constitution wanted the constitution to last for centuries and thus intended for the principles to be adapted to address contemporary issues. I believe it is the role of the judiciary to interpret the constitution to give meaning in new contexts that arise in today's world. My own life experience helped shape my progressive interpretation of the constitution. When I came out as a gay man in 2001, I thought I was giving up the ability to be in a marriage. However, a series of legal cases interpreted the constitution to allow marriage equality for the LGBT community. The language in the constitution is intentionally vague and cannot be interpreted by the text alone. Interpretation requires identifying intent and meaning in the context of today's world.**

**Judges should be fair and impartial. This is achieved through transparency from the bench. Within confidentiality limitations, I will work diligently to make certain that the Court is open and accessible to the public. I will ensure we are providing materials that lay out the criteria and process to pro-se parties and members of the public. Fairness and impartiality are also achieved by judges conducting themselves as reputable community leaders. I believe members of the legal community have an obligation to be active and engaged in the civic conversation about building a strong community.**

2. What special or unique quality would you bring to the Circuit Court bench that you believe sets you apart from your opponent?

**My vast and varied experience working with all different types of people sets me apart from my opponent. I am best prepared to preside over all the types of cases that judges hear that affect people's lives daily. I have dedicated my career to giving a voice to the voiceless and advocating for many marginalized communities. I am unique because I have experience practicing law, working in the trenches in court rooms across the state and using my law degree to serve as a non-profit executive, advocating for equity and justice for our LGBTQ+ community. I have seen what justice looks like from the bench and what justice looks like beyond the bench.**

**I served as an Assistant State Public Defender in various counties across Wisconsin. I have represented indigent criminal defendants, juveniles subject to CHIPS or delinquency and individuals facing revocation of probation and/or extended supervision. Through this I gained extensive experience representing clients at courtroom hearings including several jury trials and court trials.**

**Currently, I have pleasure of serving as the President & CEO of Milwaukee-based Cream City Foundation. Our program work focuses on providing impact-grants to LGBTQ+ organizations, administering the LGBTQ+ Scholarship program and providing convening and educational opportunities for the LGBTQ+ and allied communities. I am also the Chairperson of the City of Milwaukee Board of Zoning Appeals having been appointed by the Mayor and unanimously confirmed by all members of the Milwaukee Common Council.**

3. Describe your legal practice during your career (volume, area of law) and how has it prepared you for the Circuit Court bench?

**Since graduating law school, I have dedicated my career as a lawyer and community leader to serving underprivileged individuals. During my 15-year career as a public defender, prosecutor and non-profit executive I have developed reputation of being open, fair and highly organized. These qualities will translate well as I shift to serving the community as a member of the Milwaukee County Circuit Court.**

**As an attorney with the State Public Defender's office, I represented hundreds of individuals who were facing criminal charges in Circuit Court. I conducted legal research, wrote motion in appropriate circumstances, and conducted numerous court and jury trials. I oversaw an average of 100 open files through all aspects of the litigation process. Through this experience I gained extensive experience in courtroom hearings including preliminary hearings, sentencing hearings, court trials and jury trials. In addition to representing indigent defendants, I have represented clients at probation and extended supervision revocation hearings conducted through the Wisconsin Division of Hearings and Appeals and at sentencing after revocation hearings in Circuit Court. I have extensive experience representing Juvenile clients charged with delinquency and CHIPS actions and individuals that are subject to Chapter 51 mental health commitment actions, Termination of Parental Rights and other types of cases.**

**I have also served as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Madison. In that role, I prosecuted violations of the City's ordinance code and state traffic violations. I represented the City in court trials, jury trials, pre-trial conferences and motion hearings. I gained extensive experience negotiating cases with pro-se defendants and criminal defense attorneys. Additionally, I currently serve as the Chair of the Board of Zoning Appeals for the City of Milwaukee. This is a quasi-judicial, independent board that hearing appeals relating to the City of Milwaukee's zoning code.**

4. Share a significant case you argued before the court. What did you learn from it?

**As an attorney, I have represented individuals in several significant cases. A few include:**

- **State v. Young** - Mr. Young was charged with multiple Class C felonies for his assault of a child. I was the defense attorney in the case, representing Mr. Young.
- **State v. Bunch** - Mr. Bunch was Charged with 2 counts of Armed Robbery. He and his co- defendant set up Facebook ads to sell a computer and then robbed the victims, threatening the use of a weapon. I was the defense attorney in the case, representing Mr. Bunch.
- **State v. Philips** - While serving on Federal supervised release, Mr. Phillips was charged with felony possession of Meth. The case was dismissed. I was the defense attorney.

As a public defender representing these individuals and many others, I learned so many important lessons. I learned that investigation is key to successful representation. Law enforcement are trained to write reports a certain way that sometimes leave out important facts that may give perspective that is important for the court to consider. I learned that prosecutor's and law enforcement are trained to focus on a very specific time when the crime occurred. As a criminal defense attorney, we work to widen the scope of time to bring context and perspective to cases. I learned how to balance a large case load and lead a collaborative team of investigators, client service specialists, expert witnesses and others in all types of cases that are at varies stages of the litigation process.

5. What demeanor will you bring to the bench?

I value the importance of treating every person who has contact with the justice system with candor, respect and dignity. I was raised in a very small, farming community in rural Missouri. My parents own and operate a small business in the cattle industry. It was instilled in me at a very young age the importance of treating people with dignity and respect. My demeanor on the bench will strive to maintain this fundamental principle. Judges work with and decided cases for people with different backgrounds, values and experiences. I will treat everyone, no matter who they are, with dignity and respect.

6. Describe your involvement in the legal community and the greater Milwaukee community. How will that assist in your interactions with those who appear before you?

I have broad, entrenched experience in the Milwaukee Community. I first came to Milwaukee as a first-generation college student at Marquette University. During that time, I was active with the Marquette Gay/Straight Alliance, one of the first LGBTQ+ organizations on a Catholic campus in the entire county. I got involved in grassroots organizing for Congresswoman Gwen Moore's campaign for congress in 2004. I continued grassroots organizing in 2006 for the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center fighting against conservative efforts to amend Wisconsin's Constitution to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people's ability to marry. I was here

**in Milwaukee where I met and worked with LGBTQ+ lawyers who inspired me to go to law school.**

**Since law school I advocated for Milwaukee as a public policy associate in the State Legislature, served as a public defender and now advocate for Milwaukee's LGBTQ+ community as a non-profit executive. I am active with SSBL-Milwaukee, one of the nation's first gay softball leagues. My family is active with Miltown LGBT Families, a support and social organization for LGBTQ+ parents raising children. I am also active with downtown Milwaukee Rotary, the Wisconsin LGBT Bar Association and the Milwaukee Bar Association. This experience and involvement with many parts of our community makes me the most qualified in this race to serve as a judge, making decisions impacting the lives of all different people and communities across Milwaukee County.**

7. What is the most difficult decision you ever made in your life? Describe the decision-making process you used and how would you describe your decision-making style.

**When making decisions in my life, whether for my family, my career or otherwise, I strive to accumulate as much relevant information as possible. I am a lifelong learner and have a curiosity to learn about topics and perspectives that are different than mine. I strive to incorporate justice and equity in my decision making. I try to make decisions that are best for those whose voices are often forgotten. I strive to use my influence to advocate for those who do not have a seat at the table of power.**

8. Even if you feel like you are abiding by the letter of the residency law, are you abiding by the spirit of the law to live - full time - in the community you serve?

Judge Dedinsky – You have been on the bench for over a year. What efforts have you made to move you and your family to Milwaukee County?

Atty. Blomme – If elected, when would you and your family move to Milwaukee County?

**I am a resident of the City of Milwaukee. I live in Milwaukee. I work in Milwaukee. I own a home in Milwaukee. I pay property taxes in Milwaukee. I vote in Milwaukee. I am abiding by both the letter of the residency law and the spirit of the residency law. At time when the narrative about residency has been how law enforcement officers and teachers are leaving the city, my husband and I proactively made the decision to purchase a home in the City of Milwaukee so that we could invest in the community that I am a part of.**

**It has been well documented that my husband and children reside in Dane County where my husband has worked at UW-Madison for the last 12 years. The reason he and my children still live there is that we get our health and pension benefits**

**through his work for the State of Wisconsin. We, like many families, are trying to balance family and career. We are both working parents with successful careers. Our situation is not unique. Many families make tough decisions balancing career with raising children.**

**If elected judge my husband and I will continue to evaluate when is the right time for the rest of my family to move to Milwaukee County.**