

## Judicial candidate questions – Paul Dedinsky

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

*Respect for People. Respect for the Law.* Each circuit court judge takes an oath to uphold the U.S. and Wisconsin Constitutions. To the legislature is granted the power of fashioning public policy into laws; to the executive, the power to administer the law; and to the judicial branch, the power of interpreting and applying the law to cases and controversies.

Honoring statutes, as well as the reasoning of previous judicial decisions and precedent, honors legislative intent, as well as the principles and spirit of the law. Judges must be wary of infusing their own preferences, biases, and political leanings into their decisions. Wisconsin Supreme Court Rule 60 advises judges and judicial candidates to refrain from seeking to influence others through political affiliations. Simply put: Religion and politics have no place in a court of law.

*Why Respect for People & Respect for the Law?* Expressing this judicial philosophy is not theory. It is what I practice every day. In each case that comes before me, I prepare. As hearings proceed, each party needs a voice in the process. I ask questions in an even-handed fashion. Whenever feasible, we aim to solve real-life problems and set litigants up for success.

With each decision, out comes my statute book. I faithfully apply the law to the facts in a practical and common-sense manner. Recognizing the legislature grants me a good deal of discretion in many circumstances within the children's code, I make every effort to effectuate positive change in the youth and families who appear in my courtroom. I strive to serve in an even-handed, non-biased manner in obeying authority and applying laws to facts. For these reasons, *Respect for People* and *Respect for the Law* are the twin aims that have come to define my judicial philosophy as a judge.

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

Milwaukee faced dire circumstances of losing its Domestic Violence Unit (2005-06). With few options, I arranged travel plans to Washington, DC, with DA Mike McCann and John Chisholm, to meet with federal Congressional members from Wisconsin.

Senator Kohl, Senator Feingold, Congressmen Sensenbrenner, Baldwin, Green, Obey, Kind, Ryan, Kleczka, and Petri – Democrats and Republicans – all supported a million-dollar federal appropriation to save Milwaukee's Domestic Violence Unit. Bi-partisan effort. Success. Now, Milwaukee needs more leadership.

## JUDGE DEDINSKY'S 10-POINT PLAN: END MASS INCARCERATION & DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY INCARCERATION

- **End Domestic Abuse.** 85% of incarcerated men in the US were exposed to domestic violence as children.

- ***Oppression Education: Accentuate Education, Learning, and Awareness.*** Know and understand the experiences of those oppressed by generations of injustice. Less judgment. More learning. Accentuate empathy. Improve compassion.
- ***Restorative Justice.*** Restorative Justice remains severely underutilized. Increase 100-fold.
- ***Support Schools.*** Milwaukee has many amazing teachers and brilliant students. Accentuate Education. End the pipeline.
- ***Support Impoverished Families.*** Many incarcerated (and mentally ill) persons were raised in poverty.
- ***Faith Communities are Pillars of Strength.*** Encourage, Support, Strengthen our churches.
- ***Get Serious about Ending Human Trafficking.*** With a dearth of placements for female human trafficking victims, invest resources to protect children. Message to Men: Stand up. Stop objectifying women. Stop using children.
- ***Innovate with Business Allies.*** Working people contribute to our economy.
- ***Transform Community-Oriented Policing to add Family-Oriented Policing.*** If gangs are surrogate families, why not design innovative police practices to strengthen families? Establish *Family-Oriented Policing*, where every decision asks and answers the question: “How will this solution benefit children and support Milwaukee families?”
- ***Team Up with Diverse Community Partners.*** We must collectively “own” Milwaukee’s challenges with the input, contributions, and service of diverse, multi-disciplinary stakeholders. This plan is incomplete without you. We need ideas #11, #12, #13, etc. Unity does not mean Uniformity!

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

As a judge and state bar member for nearly 27 years, I value every legal experience. Whether serving as a civil litigator, criminal litigator, or transactional attorney, terrific colleagues and experiences have shaped me.

PRIVATE PRACTICE. From 1993-1996, I handled family law, personal injury, civil, and administrative matters. I drafted contracts, negotiated legal disputes, and drafted pleadings for landlord-tenant and breach of contract disputes.

Coordinating litigation strategy for hundreds of civil and criminal matters, I represented approximately 250 criminal defense matters (adult and juvenile). However, gaining more trial experience, meting out justice, and improving community safety led me to become a prosecutor.

TRIAL EXPERIENCE. For 20+ years, I reviewed thousands of police-referred investigations, charged criminal and civil matters, and litigated thousands of misdemeanor, drunk driving, delinquency, civil CHIPS, domestic violence, and sexual assault cases. I personally litigated over 150 court and jury trials. According to CCAP, my opponent has ZERO trials in 405 adult criminal cases.

SENSITIVE CRIMES. From 1999-2001, I litigated sexual assaults and child abuse, routinely interviewing victims and preparing them to testify. I supervised follow-up investigations, conducted discovery and motions, and strategized litigation.

LEADERSHIP. In supervising the DV Unit (2001-2007), I testified before the legislature, advised new legislation, and helped draft the state's stalking and strangulation statutes. I championed training for police, advocates, prosecutors, and probation agents locally and nationally. Focusing on "evidence-based" techniques, I trained on stalking, strangulation, confrontation challenges, and victim intimidation/manipulation.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW (May 2017 - December 2018). As chief legal counsel for the Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, I experienced a broad spectrum of governmental regulatory and transactional legal work (contracts, employment, public records, open meetings law, and administrative rule-making). I served as Ethics counsel and trainer. My litigation experience proved enormously helpful when considering legal issues and administrative law cases.

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

CIVIL JURY TRIAL.

In 1996, I successfully defended a father through a 3-day TPR jury trial. Afterwards, an experienced prosecutor observing the case approached me about applying to the Milwaukee DA's office.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT PREDATOR examples:

In 2000, I charged a 62-year old defendant with multiple counts of sexual intercourse with his oldest child, an autistic nine-year-old. The defendant had a history of domestic abuse, drug-dealing, and sexual abuse. Two other psychologically damaged sons (aged eight and six) disclosed sexual abuse and pronounced neglect. The offender received a 40-year prison sentence.

In 2001, I prosecuted a predator with a resume, including: former youth counselor at a boys' residential treatment center (Louisiana), church minister and boy scout troop leader (Missouri & Illinois), college professor (Texas), and minority youth counselor (Wisconsin). After piecing together decades of un-prosecuted sexual assaults, I secured the cooperation of several male victims from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, with remarkably similar 904.04 patterns of victimization.

In 2002, I charged two parents with approximately 29 counts of child sexual abuse to their 8-year old daughter, drug manufacturing, possession of electric weapons, causing mental harm to a child, and possession of child pornography. The case involved many complex legal challenges.

## FELONY STALKING:

From 2001-2007, I directed the Domestic Violence Unit, training many DV prosecutors, advising police investigations, offering alternatives, and developing trial strategies.

During 2006, I handled a complicated felony stalking case. He stalked the victim at home and work with violent threats, property damage, internet, text messaging, e-mail, phone calls, voicemail messages, and child manipulation. The case required leadership during investigative stages, patience with the victim and her family, an understanding of stalker typologies and power/control dynamics, and lethality assessments to plan the victim's future safety. I prepared a courtroom powerpoint presentation later used to train law enforcement.

## 5. What demeanor will you bring to the bench?

**LEADERSHIP, LEARNING, & SERVICE.** I became a judge to positively influence people. People want progress and leadership, to tear down barriers and build bridges. People want new, fresh ideas and creative, dynamic approaches.

We want our children to enjoy the fruits from lives filled with integrity, hard work, and a deep sense of purpose, mission, and vision.

Purpose? My courtroom is known as a place where people are treated fairly. No matter the case, people deserve fair, impartial treatment in a timely manner. In criminal cases, defendants deserve to be treated in a respectful, ethical, and dignified manner – in accordance with our high standards of substantive and procedural law.

Mission? Restore Justice. If a person can experience Injustice, then a person can also experience Justice. I am a judge who serves families with respect, understanding, and support.

Vision? Re-create our justice systems to serve people. We must revitalize and innovate. We need mental health courts and improved services. Our systems must reach out to the community to solve problems. And we want judges to be leaders – to take a stand against those who might steal our vision of the future, wreak havoc and trauma upon others, and create division and disharmony.

Each day, I work alongside good people committed to this Vision at Vel Phillips Youth & Family Justice Center: Judicial colleagues, state bar members, social workers, probation agents, law enforcement, educators, and faith leaders. The people I work with are Servant Leaders, Collaborative Leaders, and Transformational Leaders.

It has been said: “If you want peace, then work for justice.” I believe in standing up for justice and the law. Our “systems” are comprised of people, and I believe in the fortitude, goodness, and power of people to transform our community. Working together, we multiply goodness to achieve greatness.

**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?**

As a Children’s Court Judge, I want Milwaukee to be the best version of itself. My dedication demonstrates my care for Milwaukee, and the people of this community have made me a better judge and better person.

ADVOCATING FOR FAMILIES. I fought for people. I took over 150 cases to trial. I prosecuted sexual assaults, child abuse, and directed the DV Unit while serving on the City of Milwaukee Health Department’s Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (2001-07). My record demonstrates how hard I fight to improve Milwaukee for our families.

FAMILY-ORIENTED POLICING. I worked hand-in-hand with MPD to improve its response to Domestic Violence. Collaboratively, we formed a Family Violence Unit Planning Committee (2002-2003) to re-write MPD’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). That multi-disciplinary committee included Milwaukee citizens interested in promoting victim safety. From this effort, a specialized Family Violence Unit was established. I then trained all MPD officers – as well as Milwaukee County suburban officers – with a collaborative team including victim advocates (2003-2005).

RESTORATIVE SCHOOLS. From 2008-2013, I co-located at MPS Central Office, serving as a Restorative Justice Coordinator for Milwaukee schools. From 2014-2016, I served as the Team Captain for the Family Drug Treatment Court at the Vel R. Phillips Juvenile Justice Center.

Whether at Children’s Court, the Milwaukee County courthouse, the Safety Building and CJF, MPS Schools, or Milwaukee City Hall as a commissioner on Milwaukee’s Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, my 23 years of public service demonstrates a solid level of commitment to bringing about positive social change and justice for our Milwaukee community.

My legal career has been spent advocating for people in Milwaukee and advocating for justice.

My opponent never represented anyone in a single Milwaukee courtroom. That might explain why he has the lowest qualification rating in the MBA poll.

**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.**

It was 8:29 am on February 24, 2020. I had exactly one minute before an 8:30 am guardianship trial would commence with 8 witnesses. My cell phone rang. It was my wife calling. I answered. On the other end of the line, she was crying. Froedert Hospital just called with results from her biopsy. My heart sunk as she shared the news: malignant breast cancer. We talked. Minutes later, our call ended. I took a deep breath, steadied my emotions, focused myself, and reached for my black robe.

The challenge?

How does a judge put personal, family, and professional issues aside in order to be fully present for others who need and deserve that attentive, listening ear? Judges must be oriented to others, fully present to serve people and listen to their perspectives and positions.

That day, the guardianship trial progressed. Witnesses testified, and my energies were where they needed to be – directed towards active, engaged listening.

Being oriented to others at all times is not always easy. Each day, as attorneys, we bring ourselves – together with whatever else is pressing down upon us – into our offices and into courtrooms. As people, we can never escape ourselves. We have good days and bad days. We cope with our own personal, professional, family, and community problems while shouldering the weight of our clients' legal issues and problems. As attorneys, we are called to serve others.

When I put on the robe, I cover myself. It is more than a symbol. It is a promise I made to be present for others, to strive for judicial independence, and to never allow bias, judgment, or leanings to leak into decision-making. It is never appropriate for a judge to affiliate with a political agenda, or a progressive or conservative cause. The only cause is seeking truth and justice.

**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?

Milwaukee is my hometown. I love Milwaukee. Born at St. Joe's hospital in 1967, I grew up here with my three older brothers and sister. My dad worked 42 years for the city of Milwaukee while my mom, a Marquette grad, taught nursing at MATC for over 30 years. Lisa

and I married at Gesu church where our three children were baptized. My son is a senior at Marquette High where I attended. Following UW-Madison law school graduation in 1993, I served in private practice in our Milwaukee criminal and civil courts until 1997 when I embarked upon a 20+ year career as a Milwaukee Assistant DA. My practice areas include criminal defense, prosecution, civil, and state government service as Chief Legal Counsel at the Wisconsin Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Chief Judge Maxine White administered my Judicial Oath of Office on January 6, 2019. I promised to follow the laws of Wisconsin, and I have done so. I live in Whitefish Bay full time, with a presence on over 99% of my days.

While I live in Milwaukee, my wife dedicated herself to assisting her mom in the care of her 87-year old father on nearly a daily basis. On January 18, 2020, he died. Lisa was there for him and her mom.

I was attacked by critics who repeatedly visited our property in Delafield, presumably to photograph me there, but they came up empty because I live full time here in Milwaukee County.

I have faithfully served. I stand by my wife for lovingly caring for her dad. Even with all our family sacrifices, we would make the same decision again. When my wife recovers from her breast cancer surgery and the corona virus pandemic passes, she plans to join me here in Milwaukee.