

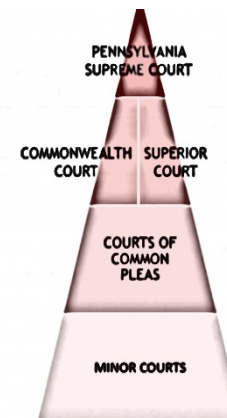
# Why Should I Care About Judges?

*In the November 2021 election, voters will choose a slew of new judges who will play key roles in shaping policy for at least the next decade. Up for election are one PA Supreme Court seat, one Superior Court seat and two Commonwealth Court Seats, along with numerous seats on the Courts of Common Pleas and the minor courts.*

*Why should you care?*

- ❖ *Statewide cases involving our laws and regulations can dramatically affect our daily lives.*
- ❖ *Anyone can become a crime victim, have a child or family member who commits a crime or becomes a victim, or become involved in a contentious divorce or child custody case.*

*We need to elect qualified, fair-minded, compassionate judges who will interpret the law in ways that advance the cause of justice and protect our rights. VOTE!*



**Judicial Retention:** Retention Judges, listed on the back side of your ballot, are seeking another 10-year term. Know that a political party is not listed on the ballot for these judges. When they ran for election in statewide races, they were elected as Republicans. We recommend you research judges running in your district.

Court	What Does This Court Do?	Examples of Cases	Why Should I Care?
<p><b>Supreme Court</b> 7 judges 10-year term Jurisdiction: State Current Composition: 5 Democratic 2 Republican* *1 seat currently Republican up for election</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highest court in PA</li> <li>• Chooses which appeals to hear from the PA intermediate appellate courts</li> <li>• Can choose to hear cases of “immediate public importance” from the lower PA courts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PA Supreme Court is the one that decided against a Republican lawsuit asking to throw out 2.5 million Pennsylvania mail-in ballots in the 2020 election.</li> <li>• In 2018, this court struck down gerrymandered voting districts as violating the state constitution. It ordered a new, fairly-drawn congressional map that took effect for the May 2018 primaries and is still in place.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PA Supreme Court is the definitive authority when it comes to Pennsylvania’s Constitution and state laws.</li> <li>• We will need this Court to protect state rights gutted by the US Supreme Court, including: voting, reproductive, autonomy, environment, and civil rights.</li> <li>• The vitality of democracy in PA hinges on this court.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Superior Court</b> 15 judges 10-year term Jurisdiction: State Current Composition: 7 Republican* 7 Democratic *1 seat currently Republican up for election</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hears all <i>appeals</i> from the Court of Common Pleas that involve individuals – criminal or civil cases, including those involving children and family.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hears appeals involving a wide variety of matters from the trial courts, including criminal, family, and civil cases (see specific examples listed under the Court of Common Pleas)</li> <li>• In 2019, the Superior Court opened the door to extending the time for victims of sexual abuse by priests to file their lawsuits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PA Superior Court is one of the busiest appellate courts in the nation, handling 8,000 matters per year.</li> <li>• PA Superior Court judges frequently run for Supreme Court.</li> <li>• Dubbed “Court of last resort” since the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania chooses to hear relatively few appeals.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Commonwealth Court</b></p> <p>9 judges</p> <p>10-year term</p> <p>Jurisdiction: State</p> <p>Current Composition:</p> <p>7 Republican*</p> <p>2 Democratic</p> <p>*2 seats currently Republican are up for election</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hears all <i>appeals</i> from the Court of Common Pleas for cases dealing with governmental and regulatory agencies.</li> <li>In addition, this court handles cases related to non-profit corporations, eminent domain matters, and immunity waiver matters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Commonwealth Court has a case pending that challenges Governor Wolf's right to mandate masks in schools. The case was brought by PA Senate Republican Leader Jake Corman.</li> <li>This court prevented the GOP from decertifying the results of the 2020 general election.</li> <li>This is the court that will first decide whether PA Senate Republicans can obtain personal information - such as address, driver's license number, and partial social security number - of every registered voter.</li> <li>Challenges to Pennsylvania's congressional district map following the release of the 2020 census data will first be heard by this Court.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges to voting laws and regulations will first be heard by the Commonwealth Court.</li> <li>The composition of this Court is overwhelmingly Republican and unsurprisingly, the Trump campaign had one of its few election victories in this Court.</li> <li>This court decides challenges to issues such as fair funding for public schools and pipeline safety regulations. A just and responsive PA Government begins with electing fair-minded judges to sit on the Commonwealth Court.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Courts of Common Pleas</b></p> <p>451 Judges</p> <p>10-year terms</p> <p>Jurisdiction: There are 60 districts in Pennsylvania, primarily following county lines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Trial courts</i> for major criminal and civil cases</li> <li>Handle litigation involving children and families</li> <li>Handle appeals from the magisterial district courts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to hearing criminal cases, the county court judges preside over every conceivable legal dispute between individuals or corporations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal injury cases;</li> <li>Contract disputes;</li> <li>Employment-related claims;</li> <li>Divorce / child custody / adoption;</li> <li>DUI cases</li> <li>Assault, robbery, rape, murder</li> </ul> </li> <li>Most jury trials are held in these courts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your legal disputes are very likely to be heard and resolved by this Court.</li> <li>Republican judges traditionally favor corporations over the rights of individuals.</li> <li>Common Pleas judges not only preside over these trials, they also pronounce decisions, judgments, and sentencing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minor Courts (Magisterial &amp; Municipal)</b></p> <p>568 Judges</p> <p>6-year terms</p> <p>Does not require a law degree</p> <p>Jurisdiction: Local Municipalities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handle civil disputes where the amount is \$12,000 or less.</li> <li>Perform preliminary hearings</li> <li>Set bail</li> <li>Decide if criminal cases go to Court of Common Pleas</li> <li>Often referred to as Small Claims court</li> </ul>	<p>Cases such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic violations</li> <li>Property damage</li> <li>Drunk and disorderly conduct</li> <li>Minor assault</li> <li>Shoplifting / petty theft</li> <li><i>Emergency</i> Protection from Abuse orders (until Court of Common Pleas can hear the case)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These very local judges play a key role in upholding the rule of law.</li> <li>A fair criminal justice system begins with electing magisterial district judges who can perform their duties with competence and compassion.</li> </ul>

