



Questions for Candidates for Court of Criminal Appeals Conservative Coalition of Harris County

This questionnaire will be posted onto the Conservative Coalition of Harris County website for public voter viewing.

Candidate Name	Position for which Candidate is Running
Sharon Keller	Presiding Judge, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals

Please give your answer to each of the following questions and please include your rationale with each answer. Please be concise & clear.

- Please describe the qualifications and experience that make you the best candidate for the office for which you are running. What differentiates you from your opponent (s)?

Answer: I have been a member of the Court for 29 years, and the Presiding Judge for 23 of those years. My record shows that I have been a conservative judge, following the Constitutions and laws. I am the longest-serving Presiding Judge in the history of the Court. I am the administrative head of the Court. In that job, I have helped prepare our legislative requests and testified before the legislature numerous times. My duties include oversight of hiring and firing, human resource issues, deciding how to spend our funds, ensuring that our cases are disposed efficiently, and overseeing and coordinating the three branches of the Court: judges' offices, central staff, and Clerk's Office. I have implemented dozens of improvements to the Court, from when and how we vote on cases, to beginning the practice of out-of-town oral arguments, to an early adoption of scanning files instead of storing paper files. Most recently, in response to COVID, I have helped change our Court from a paper-based court to one that can work remotely. Nevertheless, I believe that the Presiding Judge should be physically present at the Court every day. Our Court runs smoothly because I am familiar with its procedures and oversee the business of the Court as a whole. Moreover, I have been Chair of the Texas Indigent Defense Commission since its inception in 2002. I have helped implement the biggest change in indigent defense in Texas history, establishing oversight and partial funding of all 254 counties, and creating novel indigent defense programs across the state. None of my opponents has any experience with the responsibilities of the Presiding Judge.

2. Please describe what you believe are the most significant issues in this race and why.

Answer: The most important issue is whether a judge will be faithful to the Constitutions and laws, rather than imposing his or her own preferences in deciding cases. Our Court has greatly improved in this area since I took the bench in 1995. Second is experience. I am the only candidate who has experience running the Court.

3. List the state(s) in which you are or have been licensed to practice law, and the date(s) you received such licenses.

Answer: Texas, 1978

4. Do you have judicial experience? To what extent have you practiced in the area of Criminal law?

Answer: I have 29 years of judicial experience, all on this Court. Before that, I was an assistant district attorney in the appellate section of the Dallas Court D.A.'s Office for several years. Before that, I often worked on criminal appeals as a defense attorney. In short, most of my career has been devoted to criminal law

5. What carries the greatest influence in your rulings: criminal case law, the Constitution, state statutes, or other?

Answer: The Constitution is first, followed by state statutes. I have written opinions overruling prior case law when the prior law was not well-reasoned and was not in line with the Constitution or state statutes.

6. What has been your greatest accomplishment in your legal career and/or in your personal life?

Answer: My greatest accomplishment in my legal career has been helping the Court become more faithful to the Constitution and laws. The other judges and I have essentially turned the Court around since I took office in 1995. Our opinions are now much more predictable and much less based on personal preferences of the judges. I am also proud of the work I've done in helping create the Texas Indigent Defense Commission.

BY RETURNING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, THE CANDIDATE ASSUMES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THE ANSWERS ON THE FOREGOING REFLECT THE CANDIDATE'S BEST EFFORTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE HONESTLY AND DIRECTLY.

PLEASE SAVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO YOUR LOCAL MACHINE IN THE EVENT THAT THERE ARE ANY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WHEN YOU ATTEMPT TO EMAIL IT BACK.

Once this questionnaire has been completed, please email it to:

alex@cchc-pac.org

* **Please note:** You **must** return your questionnaire from the email address to which it was sent. Questionnaires returned from any other email address will be considered fraudulent

