



Questions for Justice of the Peace Judicial Courts Candidates Conservative Coalition of Harris County

Our questionnaire is for candidates to indicate their reasons and opinions concerning issues surrounding their races. 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
Mark Fury, former Justice of the Peace	Justice of the Peace, Harris County Precinct Five, Place Two

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

1.

Please describe the qualifications and experience that make you the best candidate in your political race. What differentiates you from your opponent(s)?
Answer:

Answer: I am the most experienced candidate in the race, having been elected to serve two terms as Justice of the Peace at the Precinct Five, Place One Court on Chimney Rock Road. I excelled in managing that Court. During my first four-years on the bench, I reduced a massive court backlog by more than 70,000 cases while staying current on 55,000 – 60,000 annual new case filings – effectively adjudicating 5-years worth of case dispositions during my first four years.

A measure of fair rulings and good judgment, my appeals rate was one of the lowest among Harris County JP courts. In JP Court, everything can be appealed as “trial denovo” – a litigant can appeal any ruling for any reason or no reason. And in the context of that reality, less than one-half of 1% of my Small Claims rulings were appealed. Meaning that in more than 95.5% of the cases, litigants found my rulings fair – or at least fair enough not to appeal!

I established an innovative new program for Truancy cases and successfully turned around a majority of youth appearing before the Court by energetically tailoring diversion orders for each individual family rather than simply collecting fines. I rolled up my sleeves to get involved with Deed Restriction disputes; I equitably worked out issues between homeowners and their Associations, focusing on dignity for all parties, finding common ground, and quick resolution to hold down costs. In most cases, I restored neighborhood peace and respect.

God has given me a desire to serve His People. My priority was and will be to serve the people

of Precinct Five. Judge Wolfe, serving in his first term, appears to be absent often and focused on earning more income. Attorneys who appeared at his court for trial, for example, have been asked to leave the courtroom to allow the Judge to use it to perform a Wedding. The physical appearance of the Courthouse lobby, under Judge Wolfe's tenure, can be mistaken for the lobby of a Wedding Chapel. Clerks make Judge Wolfe business cards for Weddings readily available.

My priority was and will be to get cases caught up, that's why I overcame a massive backlog in the past. And that will be what I will strive to do at the Place Two court. The backlog at Judge Wolfe's Court has increased every year he has been on that bench. It is currently at 68,000 cases and growing – the largest backlog not only in Harris County, but the largest backlog of any Texas Court. (I have the official state report which demonstrates this.)

2.

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

Answer:

Answer: The most pressing issue is the growing court backlog – now the biggest of any Texas Court at 68,000 cases. And second is a perceived lack of direction/motivation for the court staff. It has been reported to me by various unrelated sources that the Judge appears often to be absent, or distracted by his Wedding Business or Law practice. I will be present, work long hours. This will be my only job. I will work collaboratively and invigorate the staff to reduce the backlog. Serving the public will be our calling. Courtesy, respect and friendliness will be our values. I overcame these same challenges at the Chimney Rock Court. My talents line up perfectly with the need at the Clay Road Court. We turned around the JP court on Chimney Rock during my first term. Vote me into office, and I will do it again at the Precinct 5 Court on Clay Road.

Judge Wolfe's double mindedness, as he juggles his thriving law practice, has resulted in this Court leading all Texas Courts in backlogged cases. The "case mix" of Judge Wolfe's law practice – defense of Massage Spa workers against various criminal charges – I believe to be a deep stain on the dignity of the Judiciary in general and this court in particular. In one of his Galveston cases, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is involved owing to human trafficking concerns. How can we allow a man who presented as a Christian and a Conservative Republican be allowed to carry on in this double-minded reality? It is up to the voters to correct..

I think of a JP as the community's judge. I think of the Bear Creek neighborhood where the Courthouse is located, which used to be so family-oriented and a great place to raise children. Now overrun with "seedy" or "fringe" businesses, including an abundance of Asian Massage Spas, some open

24 hours. My Mother used to say “nothing good happens after midnight!” I think of a Father appearing at the side of his daughter in court before the Judge who represents the Spa workers. I think of the Mother who appears at the side of her son before the Judge who represents the Spa workers. Has it come to this? Can’t we, as Republicans, do better than this?

I am the most experienced candidate in this race, having been elected to serve 2 terms as Justice of the Peace at the Precinct 5 Courthouse on Chimney Rock. There, my staff and I pulled together to reduce a massive court backlog by more than 70,000 cases while staying current on 55,000 - 60,000 annual new case filings. My court came to lead the county JP Courts in civil case filings -- litigants and lawyers chose my Court for civil cases because of the reputation for fairness and efficiency we developed. A tribute to fair rulings and good judgment, the appeals rate for my court was one of the lowest among Harris County JP courts. I consistently “won” the Bar Poll – a measure of attorney preferences for judges – particularly impressive for a non-attorney JP. In contrast, regarding Judge Wolfe, just this past November, the Houston Bar Association published the results of their Judicial Evaluation Survey of practicing Attorneys. In that survey, of the 16 Harris County JPs, Judge Wolfe ranked third from the bottom. Given the low quality of certain Democrat JPs who hold JP benches in east Harris County, to be ranked third from last is embarrassing.

3.

What will carry the greatest influence in your rulings: criminal and/or civil case law, the Constitution, state statutes, or other?
Answer:

Answer: The Constitution of the United States comes first, followed by the Texas Constitution. Next comes state statutes. And finally case law.

4.

Please identify what changes can be made to the county JP court system to make it more efficient from your point of view.
Answer:

Answer: It is ill-advised that Justices of the Peace who preside over large JP Courts maintain and active law practice, as is the present case with Judge Bob Wolfe. That leads to double-mindedness and can easily result in large case backlogs. Not everything need be legislated. Hopefully, the voters can understand the importance of this when considering Judge Wolfe’s massive backlog. They can regulate this at the level of the voting booth by voting him out.

As for the JP Court system, I am running for JP Judge, not to manage the JP Court System. The JP Court system is managed by Commissioners Court. There may, for example, be talk of equalizing case balances among the 16 JP Courts. But ultimately, it is Harris County Commissioners who decide by opting to redistrict the Constable/JP Precincts every ten years or not. Constables and JPs have the same Precinct boundaries – hence “Constable/JP Precincts.” In my view, Constable politics and Commissioners Court’s view of how Constable lines should be drawn have always dominated.

My focus will be to focus on making my Court more efficient and friendly for the constituents.

5. Please describe the changes you will make to improve the efficiency of your court (the ideal workload balance for your court in hours-per-week allocated to court sessions, case review in the office, training, collaboration, etc.).

Answer:

Answer: The fullest vision for how I will run the Court after I am sworn in can be found on my campaign website, www.BringBackAGoodJP.com There, I review in detail how I will handle five major case types.

To shed some light on my work ethic. I will work as I had when I presided at the Precinct Five, Place One Court. There I was typically at the Courthouse at 6:30 a.m., ate lunch while reviewing documents or visiting with staff, and left after 6:30 p.m. – a 12-hour work day. I signed documents when I first came to work, and met with Supervisors and Staff before my first docket each day – Eviction cases at 8:00 a.m. The Eviction docket was followed by the morning docket for that day starting at 9:00 a.m. Mid-day offered another opportunity to meet with staff or review case motions and pleadings. And at 1:00 p.m., we would start the afternoon docket. Another opportunity to meet with staff and sign/review came at the end of the day. I staggered work shifts slightly for Supervisors – some starting and leaving earlier, others starting and leaving later – to allow me time to work with staff.

6. How would you prepare yourself to handle cases involving unfamiliar areas of the law?

Answer:

Answer: There is wisdom in many counselors. When faced with an unfamiliar area of the law, I will do research, but I will also look to take counsel. Harris County has always provided a staff attorney for the JPs who can do research. I will utilize that resource when appropriate. But I will do what I did before – assemble a list of half-a-dozen attorneys of good reputation who specialize in the various areas of the law that come before the JP bench. And I will call upon them to give me advice when I am unfamiliar or unsure.

This served me particularly well when I first took office as a JP. It is also one of the reasons for my low appeals rates and high favorable reviews with the Bar.

It was an honor to have served the People of Harris County Precinct Five in the past as a Justice of the Peace. It will be an honor to serve the people of Precinct Five again. Thank you for your time and dedication to the cause of putting forth the best republican candidates as our nominees.

Sincerely,

Mark Fury

Pg 4

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 and will **not** be recorded and no answers will be published in the voter's guide. CCHC-PAC deems a return from the proper email address as authentication of the correct respondent.