

**Democratic Club of Boca Raton and Delray Beach- candidate Questionnaire
Questions for Judicial Candidates August, 2020**

1. Please provide a short biography.

Caryn Siperstein is currently serving our community as a Florida Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Litigation Bureau. She represents the State of Florida, its agencies and employees. Caryn is now running for Circuit Court Judge because she wants to bring change and be of service to the residents of Palm Beach County. Caryn Siperstein is a well-respected civil litigation attorney licensed to practice law in Florida, New Jersey and New York and proud to have received an AV Preeminent rating by Martindale Hubbell Peer Review in 2019 and 2020. She has a rich history in public service and the benefit of private firm experience. Caryn began her legal career over seventeen years ago in New Jersey and moved with her husband to Palm Beach County to raise their two daughters approximately ten years ago.

Strong Work History:

- Florida Assistant Attorney General Civil & Criminal Litigation Bureau.
- FL State Mediator 15th Judicial Circuit Palm Beach County, Family & Dependency.
- Teacher /Director DKJA High School Legal Studies & Advisor of the Mock Trial team.
- Successful private law firm in NJ and FL.
- Public Defender pool attorney NJ & Clerk Superior Court Judge Passaic NJ.
- N.J. Middlesex County Prosecutor intern & NY Supreme Court Judicial Intern.

Education: Graduated in 1998 Cum Laude B.A. from Brandeis University major in American Studies and two minors in International Studies and Legal Studies. Graduate J.D. Brooklyn Law School in 2001. Teaching Fellow of the Florida Supreme Court Teacher Institute in 2015.

Volunteer Work: Education Committee City of Delray Beach, Grant Committee Junior League Boca Raton, Big Dog Ranch Animal Rescue. Previously, Board of Trustees at Donna Klein Jewish Academy and Jewish Federation 2014-2018. Small claims/landlord tenant PBC mediator.

Accomplishments: FL, NY & NJ licensed attorney. Admitted to U.S. District Courts Southern and Middle Districts of FL, and U.S. Ct. of Appeals 11th Circuit. FL Supreme

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Court Certified County, Circuit, Family & Dependency Mediator. FL Qualified Arbitrator. Served as a Somerset County NJ Court appointed Arbitrator & Mediator.

2. What experience do you bring to this position?

I am currently serving our community as a Florida Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Litigation Bureau, representing the State of Florida, its agencies and employees. I handle a wide range of matters including constitutional challenges, civil right matters, personal injury, real estate matters/eminent domain, prison litigation, judicial, prosecutorial, and sovereign immunity as well as appellate matters.

Previously I served as a Mediator for the 15th Judicial Circuit of Palm Beach County in the Alternative Dispute Resolution Division, handling Family and Dependency matters, which included divorce, time sharing, child support, and custody cases. Having already handled cases as a neutral and impartial mediator for the same Circuit I will ensure everyone is treated fairly and respectfully.

I also ran my own successful law firm for ten years, first in NJ and then in Florida, handling contracts, real estate, business, employment, and family law matters. I also served as a NJ Somerset County Court appointed Civil mediator and arbitrator as well as a pool attorney for the NJ Public Defender's Office in Somerset County.

3. Why are you running?

I seek to bring positive change and increase the level of professionalism to our judicial branch through my diverse legal and court experience. My diverse experience and accomplishments differentiate me and have prepared me to serve as your next Palm Beach County Circuit Court Judge. Having represented both Plaintiffs and Defendants, as well as served as a mediator, I understand all sides of a case and as your next elected Palm Beach County Judge I will serve you with respect, compassion, integrity, honesty, and with a commitment to fairness that our county deserves.

4. What are the major influences in your life?

My parents have been my greatest influence. My parents always stressed hard work, treating others with respect and dignity, helping others and doing the right thing. This is why I chose to be a lawyer from a young age as I wanted to help people who needed it. I consistently volunteer in our community and work hard every day as an Assistant Attorney General to make a difference. By taking the next step to become a Judge, provides me the ability to be of service to our community.

5. What is your general judicial philosophy as it pertains to the court on which you will sit as a judge?

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I will serve you with professionalism, compassion, integrity, honesty, and commitment to fairness. I will give all parties an opportunity to be heard and will be impartial. It is important that everyone is treated with respect and have their day in court. I will listen to all facts and apply the law impartially and fairly.

6. Would there be any specific types of cases in which you might find it necessary to disqualify yourself? Can you give us an example?

There are various reasons for judicial disqualification, which are addressed by [Florida Code of Judicial Conduct, Rule 2.330](#) of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration and [Florida Statute § 38.01](#) et seq. They address disqualification which include: if a judge or their relative was a party to the pending action, a judge or relative is a material witness or interested in the outcome of the case, if a judge was related to counsel of record, or a judge could not be impartial because of personal bias.

7. Why should voters support you rather than your opponent?

My diverse legal and court experience, volunteer work, and my accomplishments distinguish me and make me uniquely qualified to serve as your next Palm Beach County Circuit Court Judge. Having already handled cases as a neutral and impartial mediator for the same Circuit I seek to become a judge, I will ensure everyone is treated fairly and respectfully. In addition, serving as a NJ Somerset County Court appointed arbitrator, handling civil matters including personal injury and contract cases was highly valuable. As an arbitrator, parties would present their case, introduce exhibits, and testimony. I rendered a non-binding decision by written award. (A party who was not satisfied with the award can reject the award and have a trial by filing a notice called a “demand for a trial *de novo*” with the court). Lastly, my work as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Florida has provided a wide range of experience in various areas of the law. I will serve you with respect, professionalism, compassion, integrity, honesty, and commitment to fairness.

In addition, the Palm Beach County Bar Association judicial evaluation of the Palm Beach County Judicial Officers for 2017 and 2019 are attached hereto. “The evaluation was designed with two (2) primary goals: first, to assist the judiciary, in a positive way, to improve the quality of justice and the administration of our courts; and second, to provide the public with information regarding those who hold judicial office.” See <https://www.palmbeachbar.org/judicial-evaluations/> “Attorneys were asked to evaluate only those Judicial Officers before whom they had had at least one trial or three adversarial or other hearings within the last two years. If they hadn’t, they were asked not to evaluate that Judicial Officer regardless of how much experience they have had with that Judicial Officer prior to the last two years.” See <https://www.palmbeachbar.org/judicial-evaluations/>

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The Palm Beach County Bar Association judicial evaluation of 2019 for the Incumbent Judge Goodman was based upon 278 lawyers responding. In the “Judicial Demeanor and Courtesy to Lawyers” category, 235 out of 278 lawyers indicated “needs improvement”. In the “Common Sense (use of practical considerations in decision making)” category, 160 out of 278 lawyers indicated “needs improvement”.

8. Which justice of the Supreme Court, either alive or dead, would you like to meet and why?

Judges have their own personal politics, have been appointed by politicians, and make decisions which can be perceived to imply a political preference. Canon 7 of the Code of Judicial Conduct indicates that a Florida Judicial Candidate shall not comment on issues “inconsistent with the impartial performance of the adjudicative duties of the office” and “refrain from commenting on the candidate's affiliation with any political party or other candidate, and should avoid expressing a position on any political issue.” <https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/.../Code-of-.../Canon-7>

9. What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice, if any?

1) The current challenge is the Corona virus (Covid-19) and there are no jury trials taking place in the Circuit Court because of the public health emergency. 2) Balancing the efficiency in the Circuit Court with the volume of cases and at the same time making sure that those appearing before the Circuit Court are given time to be heard and treated respectfully. 3) Professionalism and civility in Court is important between the parties and it is important for the Judge to set the tone.

10. What is your vision for the future of our judicial system? What changes would you advocate and why?

Since the current pandemic, courts have been conducting hearings by phone or audio-visual means. This potentially could be the future of how cases would be heard saving time and money for the litigants. Additional educational classes and programs regarding technology to facilitate this would be highly beneficial. In my understanding that the same would require concurrence of other Judges or legislative enactment.

Please return completed form to Kevin McGrath at: akm_fl@yahoo.com