



THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Why Should I Care Who Is Elected?

First established in 1684, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is the oldest court in the United States and the highest court in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

With significant issues such as reapportionment, voting rights, worker's rights, choice and environmental concerns destined to be decided by the high court, any seat on this bench is significant for protecting our core Democratic values.

The Supreme Court issues final interpretations of the Pennsylvania Constitution and all state laws, and each ruling is appealable only to the Supreme Court of the United States.

The high court also oversees the conduct of lawyers and judges, and ensures orderly functioning of the commonwealth's courts. The actions of our Supreme Court significantly impact the lives of every single Pennsylvanian; Justices on the high court serve tenures of 10 years with retention votes occurring after the first 10 year term on the bench.

Issues heard by the Supreme Court include:

STATE'S CIVIL RIGHTS

Our Supreme Court can, under the Pennsylvania Constitution, establish rights and protections that exceed federal directives. That document provides all citizens with many inherent rights, including gender equality, clean air and pure water, freedom from religious persecution, a free and open press, and protections against warrantless searches, due process violations, and cruel punishments. We must elect candidates with the courage to enforce these bedrock principles of American democracy, wholeheartedly and without apprehension.

GERRYMANDERING

Our Supreme Court plays an integral role and will have the final word of approval when the process of redrawing legislative districts begins in 2020. Even though the General Assembly and the Legislative Reapportionment Commission will make an initial proposal, the issue will almost certainly be decided on appeal to the court (as it was in 2010). If we fail to elect candidates who believe in fair electoral play and the principle of "one man, one vote," we will face yet another decade of legislative fiat by an underhanded Republican majority.

JUDICIAL TRANSPARENCY

Our Supreme Court also sets and enforces the rules of how judges and lawyers must conduct themselves. The justices of our Supreme Court augment these standards of professional conduct to combat nepotism, cronyism, fraud, and improper decorum. If we want to continue to change our judicial culture to reflect Democratic values, we must support forthright candidates who exemplify good conduct and honest caution.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

As a "court of last resort" for criminal defendants, our Supreme Court has the authority to push back against the warehousing of nonviolent offenders and violations of civil rights. We can make the commonwealth safer for *everybody* by electing candidates who can properly balance the rule of law with the need for individual protections.