

JENNIFER BRUNNER

Please tell me a bit about yourself, including: Name, age, hometown, educational attainment, prior experience as an elected official, and any other details you believe are relevant.

Name: Jennifer Brunner

Age: 63

Hometown: Columbus

Educational attainment: Undergraduate: B.S. Miami University, Sociology-Gerontology, cum laude, J.D. (law degree) Capital University Law School, with honors

Prior experience as an elected official: 2000-2005, Judge, Franklin County Common Pleas Court, starting the adult felony drug court still in operation today; 2007-2011, Ohio Secretary of State (first female) - elected statewide; 2014 to present, Judge, Ohio Tenth District Court of Appeals

Any other details you believe are relevant: only Ohioan to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award in 2008 for work as Ohio Secretary of State in protecting Ohioans' right to vote; served as Rule of Law Expert for U.S. State Department, USAID, in Serbia 2012-2013 and Sri Lanka 2015, and as election observer in Egypt 2014-2015

Please describe your judicial philosophy, and how it has shaped your rulings in the past.

The bedrock of my judicial philosophy is keeping the lines bright between the three branches of government. Sometimes it takes real courage to do what is required in your own lane, acting as a check on the other branches. Understanding the Ohio Constitution that it is the legislature that determines the jurisdiction or authority of the courts, I have taken great care to apply statutes so as not to add to their meaning. For instance, I have dissented on cases involving correcting jail time credit for inmates who have requested it, when my colleagues have inserted language such as the inmate first must supply an affidavit, when the statute does not require it.

In cases involving providing people with nonviolent criminal records a chance to have their records sealed when a judge finds they are an eligible offender, have been successfully rehabilitated and that their interests outweigh the state's, I have routinely pointed out in my decisions that the law requires their records to be sealed or "expunged" and it's not a privilege or subject to any further discretion. And when the Ohio legislature gutted the consumer sales practices act, I have applied the statute as written, even though I may not have liked the outcome. This because, when I observe the limits of judicial power, democracy stays in balance. Judging for a desired outcome for anything but creating a body of solid, well-supported case law, creates bad law, and bad law hurts people.

Tell me about a career-defining case that you're particularly proud of, and why.

Pontius v. Riverside Radiology & Interventional Assocs., 2016-Ohio-1515, 49 N.E.3d 353 (10th Dist.) gave a widow and her family a chance for a fair trial after a trial judge had unlawfully excluded evidence that had been learned in a social setting from a doctor in a radiology group that blood clots had actually appeared on her husband's scans the day before he died. Her husband had been told by another doctor in the group that his scan was normal. The first doctor admitted error and had even discussed it with the other doctors. The radiology group succeeded in having the court deny that testimony as unreliable and this led to a jury verdict denying recovery for the family. I authored the case that reversed the court finding and sent it back to be tried again.

Evidence is what a court considers when applying the law. This case was about evidence. A trial judge's mistake in keeping out testimony affected whether a widow and her family were able to recover for medical error that cost her husband's life. How a court rules on evidence can affect the outcome of a case. Rules of evidence are like rules of fairness. Great care must be taken by trial judges in making decisions about what evidence is heard by a jury and what evidence is excluded so that the jury can reach a fair decision. I first sought to be a judge 20 years ago, because I care deeply about fairness. As a public servant who is a judge, it is my job to help others be treated fairly. As a Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, I would be in a position to continue to do that and to help shape the case law of the state so that all its courts may do that.

Why are you the best candidate to sit on the Ohio Supreme Court?

There are distinct differences between my opponent and me. A justice of the Ohio Supreme Court is one of seven individuals in the State of Ohio who impacts the current and future system of rule of law in our state. I view the Constitution of Ohio as being the voice of the people who entrust their rights of self-governance to three distinct branches of government but reserve other powers such as the right of referendum and initiative, to themselves. My philosophy comes from a basic respect for people and their dignity as human beings. I will fight for it when I need to. I do not see my opponent as having the breadth of life experiences I have. She has more often than not been at the center of legal initiatives that deprive ordinary Ohioans of basic choices, justice and freedoms. Whether the subject matter is workers compensation for injured workers, women's health care, government accountability, collective bargaining rights, protection of the rights of the accused and child victims of crime or a strong public school system, my opponent's record falls on the opposite side of my record. I have worked over the years so that the actions of government do not hurt the people it is meant to serve. I will continue to do that as an elected public servant, because I know that government can be a force for good in the lives of the people it serves.

JUDITH FRENCH

Please tell me a bit about yourself, including: Name, age, hometown, educational attainment, prior experience as an elected official, and any other details you believe are relevant.

Name: Judi French

Age: 58

Hometown: Sebring, Ohio (Mahoning County)

Educational attainment: The Ohio State University: B.A. (Political Science); M.A. (History); J.D., with honors.

Prior experience as an elected official: 2004-2012, Tenth District Court of Appeals; 2013-present, Ohio Supreme Court.

Any other details you believe are relevant: No answer

Please describe your judicial philosophy, and how it has shaped your rulings in the past.

In simplest terms, a judge's role is to be an umpire, to call and strike. We must not take either side or consider whether we like one side or the other, but instead look at what the law requires in every case.

Of course, judges are also human. As a mother, my heart often breaks at the tragedy represented in the facts of cases that come before me. As a judge, my role is to follow the law.

Tell me about a career-defining case that you're particularly proud of, and why.

I represented the State of Ohio before the United States Supreme Court in defense of the state's program providing scholarships to low-income students in Cleveland. The case presented an interesting and challenging constitutional law question. It was an honor to represent the state, but also to get to know and represent the families that relied on those scholarships for a quality education.

Why are you the best candidate to sit on the Ohio Supreme Court?

My record demonstrates that I am a careful public servant who works toward fairness, clarity, and efficiency on the bench. Off the bench, I have used my voice as a justice to advocate for programs that help ensure equal access to the justice system. I'm proud that I have been a part of reforms that have made the judicial system better, but there is more work to do. I look forward to being a part of that work.