

# County Court Judge Candidate (Group 3) Questions – 2024

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**What do you believe distinguishes an exceptional judge, and how do your qualifications align with those standards?**

An exceptional judge is distinguished by their unwavering commitment to upholding the law, their ability to show respect to all parties in the courtroom, and their skill in managing court proceedings efficiently. Such a judge must possess a deep understanding of legal principles, coupled with a balanced and fair demeanor.

My qualifications align closely with these standards, given my extensive background in the legal field. I have served as a state attorney and currently work as a defense attorney with the law firm of Suarez, Rios & Weinberg. In this role, I help manage five offices spanning from Sarasota to Naples. This experience has honed my skills in efficiency, client satisfaction, and strategic management—qualities that are essential for an effective judge.

Running a successful law firm requires a meticulous approach to case management and client relations, ensuring that every client receives the best possible representation. This business acumen translates directly to the courtroom, where a judge must balance multiple cases, maintain order, and deliver timely decisions. My experience has taught me the importance of preparation, punctuality, and fairness.

Furthermore, I have tried over 75 jury trials across various jurisdictions. This trial experience has provided me with a deep insight into courtroom dynamics and the practical application of legal theories. I have witnessed firsthand what strategies work and what pitfalls to avoid, which will inform my judicial approach and decision-making process.

In conclusion, my legal experience, managerial experience, and extensive trial background equip me with the necessary tools to serve as an exceptional judge. I am committed to upholding the highest standards of the judiciary and ensuring that every individual who enters the courtroom is treated with respect and fairness.

**How do you plan to ensure fairness and impartiality in your decisions while serving as a judge in Charlotte County?**

Fairness and impartiality are paramount qualities for any judge. To ensure these principles, I will consistently follow the law and apply it without bias or favoritism. Throughout my career, I have been committed to treating everyone equally and fairly, whether in the role of a state attorney or as a defense attorney with Suarez, Rios & Weinberg.

My approach involves thorough preparation, careful consideration of all evidence, and maintaining an open mind. By focusing on the facts of each case and adhering to legal standards, I can make decisions that are just and equitable. Additionally, I am dedicated to continuous learning and self-reflection to guard against any unconscious biases.

In summary, my commitment to the law and my dedication to treating all individuals with respect and fairness will guide my actions as a judge in Charlotte County, ensuring impartial and just decisions.

**What initiatives or reforms do you propose to enhance access to justice and improve the efficiency of the judicial process in our community?**

First, we already have two very successful specialty court programs—Drug Court and Mental Health Court. These programs address specific needs within our community, providing targeted support and rehabilitation opportunities. I propose adding a third specialty court: Veterans Court. This court would focus on veterans who, due to mental health issues or substance abuse problems, have found

themselves in legal trouble. With the collaboration of the state attorney and the defense bar, Veterans Court would ensure that our veterans receive the specialized attention and support they deserve, helping them reintegrate into society and reducing recidivism rates.

Secondly, I propose establishing a satellite court in the West End/Englewood area. Currently, residents from Englewood and the West End face long drives—often over an hour—to the courthouse in Punta Gorda. While our clerk already holds Englewood days, introducing regular court sessions in this area would significantly improve access to justice. By utilizing the existing annex building, we can make it more convenient for residents to appear before a judge without the burden of extensive travel. It is more practical and efficient for one judge, along with a clerk and bailiff, to travel to Englewood than for 50 people to make the trip to Punta Gorda. This initiative would not only save time and resources for the community but also ensure that justice is accessible to all, regardless of their location within the county.

In summary, by implementing these initiatives—Veterans Court and a satellite court in the West End/Englewood area, we can enhance access to justice, provide specialized support where it is needed most, and improve the overall efficiency of our judicial process in Charlotte County.

**Please answer each question in 300 words or less and email back to [bwhite@charlottecountychamber.org](mailto:bwhite@charlottecountychamber.org) on or before July 12, 2024.**



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