

DOLPHIN DEMOCRATS QUESTIONNAIRE
BETSY BENSON
CANDIDATE FOR BROWARD COUNTY
COURT JUDGE, GROUP 13

1. Where and when did you attend law school?

Nova Southeastern University School of Law, 1981-1984, Juris Doctorate.

2. How long have you been a member of the Florida Bar? Over 31 years from October of 1984 to present.

3. In which other states (if any) have you been admitted to the Bar? I am admitted to the Federal Bar.

4. Have you ever been disciplined by a State or Local bar? No.

5. Do you have any previous experience as a judge or conducting alternative dispute resolution?

I have taught trial advocacy and acted as a 'Judge' numerous times, and in final trials for Nova Law School as well as the National Institute of Trial Attorneys. I have also acted as a pro bono Guardian and completed the course work to do so.

6. Have you ever held any non-judicial elected offices? No.

7. Have you ever held any non-judicial appointed offices? No

8. Please list any awards/honors received relevant to the position you seek.

Speaker and lecturer on numerous topics including but not limited to; criminal law, trial law, jury selection, trial procedure and witness preparation on behalf of the Florida Bar Speaker's Bureau, Nova Southeastern University School of Law, and the Broward County Schools.

9. Briefly describe your legal background (firms, areas of expertise, etc.)

I have a varied and broad base of legal experience: civil, criminal, administrative, social security, landlord/tenant, and probate. I began my legal career as a Certified Legal Intern at the State Attorney's office, clerked for Benson, Ray and May where my father was a partner and my guiding light. I was a probate attorney and guardian for 12 years, attorney with Legal Aid of Broward, Inc., with Amy McGrotty, PA, and spent the last 23 years with the Broward Public Defender's Office. I started as a trial lawyer assigned to the misdemeanor

division and worked my way up to my present position which is Capital Crimes attorney certified by the Florida Supreme Court to try death penalty cases. During my career I have tried almost 100 cases before a jury.

10. Briefly describe any professional legal experience you have had with civil rights issues.

As a criminal defense lawyer I have handled numerous matters involving the Bill of Rights and their application. I worked hard with other advocates for to obtain funding and care for AIDS sufferers as a member of Act Up. We turned our backs on Fred Phelps and his hate at Pedro Zamora's funeral in Miami in 1994. My partner and I testified on the Equal Rights Ordinance before the Broward County Commission in 1994. We also co published OUT Pages, a resource guide for Gay and Gay Friendly businesses. I worked with a small group to write the first 501C3 for what is now the PRIDE Center from the garage of Alan Schubert's house.

11. Please list the professional, community, social, and religious organizations of which you are now or have been a member in the past ten years.

Florida Bar, Broward Bar, Broward County Women Lawyers, B'nai B'rith Justice Unit, Florida Women Lawyers, Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network, Hispanic Bar, T.J. Reddick Bar, South Broward Bar, Weston Bar, Harbordale School Association, National Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys, NAACP, Wilton Manors Historical Society, South Florida Family Pride. I am a Co-Founder: 2-4theshow.org, which gives Broward's children the opportunity to experience the performing arts.

12. Briefly describe any personal experiences you have had with GLBT friends or relatives.

I can draw from my own life experience to answer this question. My brother and I are both GLBT. I have known derision, second class status and fear that who I am could cost me everything. Until recently, I was unable to realize my greatest dream, to be a mother, because I was GLBT.

13. Briefly describe what you perceive to be the greatest obstacles to justice.

I have a deep "Passion for Justice and Equality," and I believe that being quiet in the face of bigotry and hatred is the greatest obstacle to justice. I think it is incumbent on everyone to stand up to racism, xenophobia and homophobia regardless of who the speaker might be or how tacit the statement or act may seem. I was moved when Virginia Apuzzo appeared several weeks back at the Stonewall library. She forcefully stated that the fight for equal rights is not over, regardless of the recent victories on the issue of marriage equality. She is right. The fight is not over until all people enjoy equal rights and there is justice for all.

14. Briefly describe what you hope to accomplish as a judge.

County Court is the court of the people. I know that many problems that come before a County Judge can serve as opportunities to help people before they are lost to us. Being a judge on the County Court is the fruition of my public and community service. I will bring my varied professional experience, my compassion and respect for, and understanding of people who will appear before me to the bench. I hope to use my life experience, professional skills, and character attributes to bring just resolutions based on the law, to provide a level playing field free of biases, to give everyone a full and fair opportunity to be heard, and to be respected as a fair, compassionate, and conscientious judge.

15. Briefly describe the greatest strengths you bring to the judicial role.

My greatest strength is my experience. I have learned from 31 years in court, and 56 years of life experience, that no one is better or worse; we are all equal, and deserve to be treated equally. It is the duty of the Judge to listen, to understand, to seek solutions, but mostly to serve all who come before the court seeking to be heard. I do not see the practice of law as a privilege, but as a solemn responsibility. The role of the Judge is to continue as a servant of the law and the litigants. I will listen closely, attentively, and carefully to all sides, apply the law to the issues, and render my verdict with objectivity. I will not leave my life experience at the door, I know that everyone needs help at some time in his or her life. I hope to take the time to find out how I can make people's lives better within the parameters of the law. I will bring my broad and extensive experience, as well as the lessons I have learned in my quest for justice, if chosen by the citizens of Broward to serve.

16. Do you wish to be identified as GLBT?

Yes.

Summary: Please briefly explain why gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender voters should support your candidacy (you may use this space for any additional comments or to further explain any responses to the above questions).

I ask that you endorse my candidacy for County Court Judge because I bring the values, extensive legal background, strong courtroom experience, and ability that will ensure fairness for everyone. In addition, I bring a sensitivity from my life experiences.

I know that although the United States and Florida Constitutions promise equal rights for all, that struggle still continues. I will be the jurist that knows struggle and uses the position to help as many as possible while, above all, following the law.

Please attach the Broward County Statement of Ethical Campaign Practices and attach a copy.