

### **DOLPHIN DEMOCRATS 2016 JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Candidate name: ANDREA RUTH GUNDERSEN Office sought: CIR. COURT JUDGE, GRP 9  
Incumbent? NO

Address: P.O Box 290882, Davie, FL 33329-0882

Phone: 954-362-0313 Email: andrearuthforjudge@gmail.com Website: www.AndreaRuthforJudge.com

1. Where and when did you attend law school? **1989 – 1992 Nova University Shepard Broad Law School**
2. How long have you been a member of the Florida Bar? **Since September 1992**
3. In which other states (if any) have you been admitted to the Bar? **none**
4. Have you ever been disciplined by a state or local Bar? NO If so, explain briefly.
5. Do you have any previous experience as a judge or conducting alternative dispute resolution? YES If so, specify court(s) and/or other forum and number of years.

**I have been a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator since 1998 and have conducted numerous mediations both privately and as a Contract Mediator for the Broward County Court Mediation program.**

6. Have you ever held any non-judicial elected offices? If so, please list office(s) and years served. **NO**
7. Have you ever held any non-judicial appointed offices? If so, please list office(s) and years served.

**2014-present – Appointed by Patti Good to the School Board of Broward County Diversity Committee**  
**2015-present - Appointed by Mayor Martin Kiar to the Broward County Commission on the Status of Women Advisory Board**

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

**2016 Florida Super Lawyer**  
**2015 Florida Super Lawyer**  
**2016 Florida's Legal Elite**  
**2015 Florida's Legal Elite**  
**2014 Florida's Legal Elite**  
**2013 Florida's Legal Elite**  
**2012 Joseph J. Carter Professionalism Award**  
**2012 AV Preeminent® Peer Review Rated Attorney**

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

**During my last year of law school, as a Certified Legal Intern, I prosecuted misdemeanor cases in West Palm Beach. I gained valuable jury trial experience while working there which I have utilized in my private practice for the past 23 years practicing in both misdemeanor and felony divisions.**

**My experience, in my first job out of law school, was working as an attorney with the Small Business Administration, Disaster Relief program helping the victims of Hurricane Andrew secure loans to**

rebuild their lives and their businesses after a devastating loss. This experience taught me how fragile life can be and that the law can have a positive impact on individual lives.

Prior to opening my own Family Law Practice over 17 years ago, I was an attorney, representing the Department of Revenue in Child Support Enforcement cases, to obtain child support for families and children in Broward County.

Throughout my professional career I have gained a broad range of knowledge of the law, the rules of procedure and the practical aspects of the operations of a courtroom in both the civil and criminal arena. As a litigation attorney, I have spent a large part of my practice in court and been able to observe how judges in Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach Counties run their respective courtrooms and I have seen what works and what does not work. As a litigator, with experience in hundreds of jury trials and bench trials I can apply the rules of evidence and rules of procedure to afford the parties due process. As a Certified Family Mediator, I have acquired the skills of being a good listener and problem solver.

Since going into private practice, I have handled cases in a broad range of areas of law, including criminal defense, domestic violence, dependency, delinquency, and family law. Working with families in discord I have learned to exercise tolerance, patience, listening skills and to be an adviser, counselor and problem solver. I have learned that just because people are in a bad situation, does not make them bad people and everyone deserves respect when they enter into the court system. Working with the Mission United Veteran's Pro Bono program and the organizing committee that created the first Veteran's Court in the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, I have learned the special needs and circumstances of our veteran's when interacting with the legal system.

In addition to my legal experience, my experience as a single parent, working full time while I went to school part time to earn my Bachelor Degree in Business Administration and subsequently going onto law school, I gained skills in stress management, crisis management and time management that have assisted me in working through any situation. As a mother and grandmother it has required me to acquire keen listening skills, patience, and to exercise tolerance when called upon to act not only as a judge, but as a counselor, teacher, mediator and problem solver. Through my life I have become a good listener able to make decisive decisions and to listen with an open mind and a cool head.

As a Mediator, I have used my legal knowledge, listening skills and my negotiation skills to guide individuals to reach resolution of their outstanding legal disputes. In mediation, I am able to offer options that the parties may not have considered and empower the parties to resolve their conflict between themselves rather than having a court make the decision for them.

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

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.

**I serve on the Diversity Committee for the Broward County School Board and the Broward County Commission on the Status Women Advisory Board. I also serve on the Mount Olive Development Corporation Board of Directors and I am on the Board of Directors of the Dania Beach Lions Club. I am also a member of the American Association of University Women, Weston Chapter and a member of the Davie Woman's Club.**

**I served on the organizing committee, with Bill Kling, which helped to create the first Veteran's Court in Broward County approximately 6 years ago. I also work with the Mission United Veteran's Pro Bono program to recruit and mentor volunteer attorneys to provide free legal services to veterans and their families as well as providing legal services.**

**I served on the Board of Directors of the Broward County Bar Association (BCBA) from 2010-2012. I am currently the President of the West Broward Bar Section and the Vice President of the South Broward Bar Association. I have been a member of the BCBA Professionalism Committee since 1996 and have chaired the committee for several terms. I created a mentorship program for the Broward County Bar Association, to help new attorneys learn to practice with integrity and professionalism which ultimately benefit the citizens of the community. I also serve on the Bench & Bar Committee and Chair a subcommittee on the Bench & Bar Convention Committee. I created and Chaired the New Lawyers Orientation which welcomes the newly licensed attorneys each year to the 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit with an emphasis on professionalism. Each year I convened a panel of the Administrative Judges to discuss the "do's and don'ts" in their divisions, as well as having the Voluntary Bar Associations welcome the new attorneys into their legal community. The Orientation program encourages pro bono service and representatives from Legal Aid have stated that my program is one of the most successful programs they participated in for assigning pro bono cases. When we have attorneys in the community practicing with integrity and professionalism, the community as a whole benefits.**

**I am also a Certified Guardian Ad Litem representing the best interest of children in both the Family Division and also the Domestic Violence Division. I am also an Attorney Ad Litem with the Tracy McPharlin Pro Bono Initiative.**

**I am a volunteer with Broward Lawyers Care and LegalAid Services of Broward County on the Advice & Counsel Hotline. As Pro Bono liaison for the South Broward Bar Association, I also recruit other attorneys to volunteer for the "Hotline" which provides free legal advice to those economically challenged individuals that Legal Aid is unable to provide full representation services for due to budgetary constraints.**

**I was appointed by Chief Judge Peter Weinstein to the Professionalism Panel Committee that helped draft the Administrative Order creating the 17<sup>th</sup> Circuit's Professionalism Panel, to oversee unprofessional conduct of attorneys and have subsequently been appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Professionalism Panel for the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.**

**I worked with the South Florida Joint Civility Project which is actively working on improving the civility and professionalism within the practice of law through education, communication and programs to deter unprofessional conduct throughout South Florida**

**As a Justice Teaching Attorney Volunteer for several years now, I do presentations to middle and high school students regarding the law, and I have been able to have a positive impact in children's lives. It is a rewarding experience to help to educate our youth.**

**For the past 6 years I have conducted an annual courthouse tour for the Plantation Seminole Middle School DECAL students giving them an opportunity to observe courtroom proceedings, participate in CSI lab demonstrations, and participate in mock trials and other demonstrations and presentations.**

**As a guest lecturer at Nova Southeastern School of Law for the past 8 years now, I have lectured to law students on the topics of Professionalism, Women in the Law, Family Law, and Mediation. Through my presentations I am able to emphasize the importance of practicing with integrity and professionalism no matter what area of law you practice.**

**As an Advanced Certified Scuba Diver and a member of the Dive Bar Association, I have worked with the Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center Coral Restoration Project transplanting staghorn coral to help restore the Broward County Coral Reef system. I am also a member of the South Florida Divers, Inc. a scuba diving club.**

**I have been a member of Davie United Methodist Church since 1997.**

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

**Throughout my life I have had a number of GLBT friends. My closest and dearest friend and mentor Robert, was gay and we met when I was working at my first law firm in 1993. He became my mentor after the conclusion of a case that we were litigating together from opposite sides. We shared a friendship for almost 19 years and when I opened my own practice 17 years ago, we shared office space for over 12 years, until he passed away. To me, he was my friend and I never thought about his sexual orientation as a factor in our relationship. As a colleague and a friend, Robert and I worked together and socialized together with our families and friends. I met many of his friends in the GLBT community, some of whom became my friends and some of whom even became clients. In addition, Robert's life partner was an associate in our office and we too became friends throughout the years we shared office space.**

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

**The greatest obstacle to justice is closed minds, lack of respect and the failure of the law to catch up to the current status of society. The failure of the law to recognize all people as individuals who are entitled to "equal rights under the law" is a travesty.**

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

I have always strived to make a positive difference in the lives of those I have come in contact with. In my professional life I have helped families in turmoil to navigate through the legal system and at times helped them avoid entering the legal system. I have also worked to improve the professionalism in the practice of law. I understand that as Judge, I would serve the community and that the decisions I make may have far reaching consequences that impact not only the person standing before me, but their family, friends, neighbors and others in the community. I believe, and I have been encouraged by many colleagues, that as a Judge I will be able to apply my experience, knowledge of the law and judgment to help make a difference in the lives of a broader base of the community. Those who come into my courtroom will be respected and assured of a fair administration of justice. In these next two years, our Family and Dependency Court are about to lose three of our most seasoned Judges to mandatory retirement, and those are the last of our Judges in Circuit court with the wealth of experience in Family law and Dependency. I am the only candidate in my race, Circuit Court Group 9, that has over 23 years of experience working directly with families in turmoil, abused and neglected children and domestic violence victims and I believe our families and our children deserve to have a judge on day one that understands what they are going through and I hope to fill some of that void.

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

As a single parent, with only a high school education, and a two and a four year old to raise I had to develop and maintain a strong work ethic, commitment to my family, integrity and stability. I worked my way through college and then law school. In my professional practice, I work with people in a heightened level of emotion, in cases that are emotionally charged. At times I have been confronted with ethical dilemmas when a client has made demands that would not live up to the professional code of conduct or my standards of professional behavior. In those instances, I have abided by both the Florida Bar ethical rules and the local Codes of Conduct and counseled my clients accordingly. I have prided myself on being straightforward when dealing with opposing counsel with a focus on resolution.

Throughout my professional career I have gained a broad range of knowledge of the law, the rules of procedure and the practical aspects of the operations of a courtroom in both the civil and criminal arena. As a litigation attorney, I have spent a large part of my practice in court and been able to observe how judges in Broward, Dade, and Palm Beach Counties run their respective courtrooms and I've been able to see what works and what does not work. As a litigator, with experience in over 100 jury trials and bench trials I can apply the rules of evidence and rules of procedure to afford the parties due process with a commitment to treat every individual with respect and dignity.

I have worked tirelessly to improve the professionalism in the practice of law. I have been a member of the Broward County Bar Association Professionalism Committee since 1996 and have chaired the committee for several terms. I created a mentorship program for the Broward County Bar Association seven years ago, to help new attorneys learn to practice with integrity and



professionalism. Since 2012, I served on the South Florida Joint Civility Project, working with other voluntary bar associations to improve the professionalism within the practice of law in the South Florida area. I was honored to receive the Joseph J. Carter Professionalism Award in 2012 from the Broward County Bar Association. I have also received an AV Preeminent rating from Martindale Hubbell being rated by my peers to have the highest level of integrity and legal expertise.

In addition to my legal experience, my experience as a single parent, working full time while I went to school part time to earn my Bachelor Degree in Business Administration and subsequently going onto law school, I gained skills in stress management, crisis management and time management that have assisted me in working through any situation. As a mother and grandmother it has required me to acquire keen listening skills, patience, and to exercise tolerance when called upon to act not only as a judge, but as a counselor, teacher, mediator and problem solver. Through my life I have become a good listener able to make decisive decisions and to listen with an open mind and a cool head.

16. Do you wish to be identified as GLBT (optional)?

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).

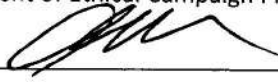
As an attorney I have been involved with many organizations, including the Broward County Bar Association, where I have served on numerous committees including the Bench & Bar Committee, chaired several committees including the Professionalism Committee and sub-committee of the Bench & Bar Committee, and sat on several boards, some as President and Vice President, including the Broward County Bar Association, the South Broward Bar Association, the West Broward Bar Section and the Association of South Florida Mediators and Arbitrators.

I have worked within the community through my Dania Beach Lions club, the Broward County School Board Diversity Committee, the Broward County Commission on the Status of Women Advisory Board, the American Association of University Women which focuses on the empowerment of women and girls. I have also been involved with the Inns of Court which focuses on professionalism and mentorship. I have lectured to law students and middle and high school students on the topic of the law. For the past 6 years I have conducted an annual courthouse tours for middle school students so they could observe the court system and the law they are studying in school. As a judge, within the boundaries of the Judicial Canons, I would continue to be involved in the community and would use my position to better educate the public about the justice system. It is only through outreach education can confidence in the judicial system be achieved.

I have handled cases in a broad range of areas of law, including criminal prosecution and criminal defense, domestic violence, dependency, delinquency, and family law. Working with families in discord I have learned to exercise tolerance, patience, listening skills and to be an adviser, counselor and problem solver. I would be honored to serve as your next Circuit Court Judge. Now more than ever Your Family Matters.

I have signed the Broward County Statement of Ethical Campaign Practices. **N/A—Circuit Court**

Signature of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 05/18/2016

**We ask that you return your completed questionnaire no later than May 25, 2016** You may return your questionnaire in any of the following ways:

- Mail to the address: The Dolphin Democrats, P.O. Box 23194, Oakland Park, Florida 33307-3194.
- Fax to (954) 630-0830
- Scan and email to (info@dolphindems.org)
- If you have any questions or concerns, please call our google voice line at (954) 951-0830 and someone will return your call.