

DOLPHIN DEMOCRATS 2016 JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate name: Lea Krauss Office sought: Broward County, Circuit Court Judge, 17th Circuit, Group 9
Incumbent? No, and the current Judge is retiring from the seat

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1. Where and when did you attend law school?
University of Miami School of Law - August 1997 through December 1999
Graduated early, in 2 ½ years
*I attended a summer semester abroad at the London University School of Law (June and July 1998)
2. How long have you been a member of the Florida Bar? Since 2000
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.
Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator – 2012 to present
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. No
8. Please list any awards/honors received relevant to the position you seek.
The seat I am running for is an open seat because the sitting Judge is retiring. I have never been elected as a judge before and this is my first time running. However, I have been working in and giving back to the community for many years. I have been recognized by many organizations for my commitment to service and for being a strong leader.
9. Briefly describe your legal background (firms worked for, areas of expertise, etc.).
I began my legal career in public service as a Broward County Assistant State Attorney. I served as a prosecutor for three years, working my way up to become a lead in the Felony Trial Unit. I handled heavy caseloads in excess of 300 at a time, which prepares me for the demanding workload of a Broward County Circuit Court Judge. Working as a prosecutor afforded me unique insight into the workings of the criminal justice system, the courtroom and invaluable trial experience. I was recognized for excellence in my courtroom skills, when the Chief of the trial unit handpicked me to attend specialized training at the Institute of Police Technology and Management. After my tenure as a prosecutor, I went into private civil practice before opening my own law firm. Over the past 16 years I have been an avid litigator and negotiator in both criminal and civil law cases. I became a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family mediator in 2012. I have been appointed by judges in family court to serve as a Guardian Ad Litem (GAL), to advocate for children in divorce proceedings. As a GAL, it is a privilege to advise the judiciary on what is in the best interest of the child in the divorce. Additionally, it is an honor to be appointed as a GAL, because it signifies the judges recognize and respect my reputation for integrity, patience, compassion and professionalism.
10. Briefly describe any professional legal experience you have had with civil rights issues.
As the President of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network, I routinely assisted connecting aggrieved parties with counsel best suited to litigate their cases.

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 – Member in good standing since 2000
- Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network – 2011 Founding Incorporator
 - Served as President for initial 5 years (2011-2015)
- Pride Center at Equality Park – Served on the board 2011-2012
 - Inaugural chair of the “Women with Pride” program launched in 2012
- Florida Association of LGBT Lawyers and Allies – Association created in 2014
 - Member since inception
- Lambda Legal – Liberty Circle Member 2013-2014
- Our Fund – “First 100 Funders” Member 2013-2015
- B’nai B’rith Justice Unit – Member since 2004
 - Currently serve on the board of directors
- Florida Association of Women Lawyers – Member since 2004
- Broward County Women Lawyers Association – Member since 2004
- Broward Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers – Member since 2004
- Broward County Bar Association – Member since 2004
- Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers – Member since 2010
- Broward County Matrimonial Lawyers Association – Member since 2010
- Jewish Adoption Foster Care Options (JAFCO) – Volunteer since 2012
 - “Forever Friends” Program Mentor
- Jewish Federation – Member since 2014
 - Currently serve on the Steering Committee for the Women’s Executive Circle
- Broward County Hispanic Bar Association – Member since 2014
- Temple Beth El – Member since 2015
- Tower Forum – Member since 2016
- 10-13 Club of Retired NY Police Department Officers – Associate Member since 2016
- Mission United Volunteer - 2016

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

I am an out lesbian and I have been involved in the LGBT community in different capacities for many years. I have served in many leadership positions in LGBT organizations. I was a founding incorporator of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network (“GLLN”) in 2011, and served as President from 2011-2015. The GLLN grew from 3 people at my first meeting to nearly 200 members including lawyers, judges, law students and local businesses. I am very proud of the profound impact the GLLN has had on the community by providing a platform for networking, education, mentoring, fundraising and socializing. In 2011, I was asked to join the board at the Pride Center at Equality Park to help increase women’s involvement at the Center. While on the Pride Center board, I volunteered to be the founding chair of the program “Women with Pride”. “Women with Pride” began as an initiative to create a directory of healthcare providers sensitive to the needs of lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender (LBT) women. The program has since expanded to include education, networking, support groups and a full-time female staff. I am honored to have worked with so many incredibly dynamic women and men to get this program started and to watch how it has grown to meet the changing needs of the LBT community. I was one of Our Fund’s First 100 Funders and a Liberty Circle Member with Lambda Legal. Professionally, I have represented and counseled many LGBT clients over the years. I am humbled and grateful to have received the following awards, honors and recognition within the LGBT community:

- Featured in “Just Vows” (April 2016 issue)
- Featured in the “Florida Agenda” (January 2016 issue)
- Featured in “Out50” – Honoring the 50 most influential people in Wilton Manors (2014)

- Attended 2014 White House Reception for LGBT Pride Month to meet the President of the United States
- Featured in Go Magazine's "100 Women We Love" (2014)
- Proclamation by Wilton Manors Mayor, Gary Resnick, declaring April, 29th to be "Lea Paige Krauss Day" for my commitment, service and dedication to the LGBT community
- Host & steering committee on several events and fundraisers for the LGBT community

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

I believe the greatest obstacle to justice is access to the court system. Our system can be difficult to understand and typically requires legal counsel to effectively advocate a position. Many people do not seek redress for a legal issue because they are unaware they may have legal recourse or perhaps cannot afford an attorney.

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

Nearly every day for the past 16 years, I have gone to court seeking justice. As a judge, I will ensure justice is achieved and that all people are treated fairly. I will be an efficient judge, which begins with starting court promptly and being prepared for the docket of cases every day. I will apply the laws evenly so parties can expect consistency in how I will handle matters. A judge's role is similar to being an umpire in a baseball game. Like an umpire, the judge makes sure both parties follow the same rules and that the rules are uniformly applied so the final outcome is fair. The judge, like the umpire, does not make the rules nor change the rules to favor one party over another.

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

The greatest strengths I bring to the judicial role are a depth of experience, an even temperament, innate leadership skills and a strong work ethic. Organization, punctuality, and hard work are the characteristics that made me a successful Assistant State Attorney handling upwards of three hundred cases at a time and running a successful law practice as a solo practitioner. As a prosecutor I was often the first person to turn the lights on at the office, and I was often the last person to leave at night. My strong work ethic carried over into my private practice. I am the most qualified candidate because I have a depth of experience with over 50 trials, over 1000 evidentiary hearings, and I have handled a wide range of cases for plaintiffs and defendants in both criminal and civil law. Secondly, my temperament sets me apart as evidenced by the overwhelming support I have received from the community with endorsements from over 200 people and organizations, and contributions from over 600 people. My endorsements include the Victory Institute, the PBA (Police Benevolent Association), the IAFF (International Association of Firefighters), Democracy for America, elected officials, community leaders, and Broward County voters.

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

Yes, I wish to be identified as a lesbian.

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 firmly believe my leadership skills, my experience in the courtroom, and my belief in treating all people fairly, make me the most qualified candidate. The judicial bench should reflect the diversity of Broward County, and the LGBT community is underrepresented. I am running for this position because I would be an asset to the bench as an experienced and even-tempered litigator. I will decide all cases according to the law and strictly on the merits, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

As a judicial candidate, I have received, read and understand the requirements of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct.

Signature of Candidate:



Date:

5/24/16