

1

How well do the local Justice Courts protect the due process rights of defendants in criminal proceedings?

- local Justice Courts do an excellent job in protecting due process rights- its probably the top item they get trained, counseled and reminded about, a good example is the current process of after hours arraignment with lawyer

2

What are the benefits/disadvantages of local Justice Courts being presided over by non-lawyer Justices?

-this has nothing to do with the judge being non-lawyer, --the advantage of a local court judge is he/she is elected by the local people, is known by the local people, and has a character and skills that the local voters and town constituents are looking for. If you require the local judge to be a lawyer you will immediately reduce the potential candidates for the voters to look at by 99.9%. If you make this some kind of consolidated Court you will immediately eliminate the first part of the above statement.

-re the question of some perceived disadvantage of a non-lawyer town judge:

- it is my opinion that a lawyer judge does not necessarily make a better judge than a non-lawyer judge at the local level and quite frankly just opposite could happen.

If the higher priority is that the local court judge is elected by the local people, is known by the local people, and has a character and skills that the local voters and town constituents are looking for in a Town judge, the chances of finding the better person to achieve that is likely to be a non-lawyer.

If the higher priority is that the local court judge has the quality of decisions and involvement in local caseloads, the chances of finding the better person to achieve that is likely to be a non-lawyer.

As far as lacking a law degree, 99% of the local caseload is more about

justice and finding ways to help those people who need help and in doing this as a service to the community. The level of decisions made at the Town court level are easily learned and can be explored and researched easily with help from the Albany resource center.

Even if you consider that a non-lawyer judge will make an error on a decision or procedure, if you look at the appeal courts and the Commission on Judicial conduct, its just as likely to point to the existing records of lawyer judges that have made an error on a decision or procedure.

3

Do the Justice Courts provide consistent and quality administration of the criminal and civil law, operating in an independent, public and transparent manner?

-100% yes, local court judges and clerks are continually trained and reminded to be consistent, independent and transparent.

4

What is your opinion about a plan which would create one or two strategically located municipal courts presided over by a lawyer-Judge, to replace the 13 local town/village courts where non-lawyer Justices may preside?

-I believe this would be a disaster and a huge diss-service to all the local community, taxpayers and voters of this county. It will cost more, be less available and less connected to the local community.

5

What is your opinion about a plan which would eliminate all village courts (Cayuga Heights and Freeville) and let the towns absorb those caseloads?

-if the village boards want it , I could see that making sense.

6

What is your opinion about a plan which would eliminate the second Justice in town courts and thereby increase the remaining Justice's

time/responsibility?

-anyone floating this idea is not fully thinking about the problem of finding a judge for after hours on-call arraignments which is required of this position. Eliminating judges will reduce the number of judges available that will answer the phone. In addition the larger town courts, (Dryden, Lansing, Ithaca) have caseloads that require 2 judges.

7

What is your opinion about a plan which would move all criminal cases to one or two District Courts (presided over by lawyer-Judges), or to the Ithaca City Court, and leave the town and village courts otherwise intact?

This is a ridiculous idea as stated above. It kind of combines the worse of the problems as discussed in items #2 and 4 and 6 .

8

What is your opinion about a plan which would move all after-hours arraignments to a central booking area?

Great idea, lets do it

9

What suggestions do you have for improving the local justice court system?

Item 8 above

All else is working great

This is a process that has evolved over 50 years

I have been Town Justice for 23 years and in the past 10 years the State local judicial system and support we have made leaps in improving training, resources, courts of record and computer enhanced records.