

ALLEGHENY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

JUDICIAL CANDIDATE PLEDGE

I, Heather Schmidt Bresnahan, a candidate for judicial office, have familiarized myself with the Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Civility, as promulgated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. I have directed special attention to Canon 4 of the Code of Judicial Conduct, including Rules 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4. I agree to conduct my judicial campaign consistent therewith and further consistent with *Republican Party v. White*, 536 U.S. 765 (2002). I further pledge that all campaign advertising will be done fairly, accurately, truthfully, and will maintain the dignity appropriate to the judicial office which I am seeking.



Signature of Candidate



Date

ALLEGHENY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AUTHORIZATION

As a candidate or potential candidate for Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas the Pennsylvania Appellate or Federal Courts, I hereby acknowledge and authorize the procedures of the Allegheny County Bar Association Judiciary Committee, including the following:

1. If I become a candidate, the Allegheny County Bar Association Judiciary Committee will make available to the public the Questionnaire, and my responses, except for the questions and responses which are acknowledged to be confidential, which information shall remain available only to the Committee.
2. My responses are provided without breaching client confidentiality as embodied in Rule 1.6 of the Rules of Professional Conduct.
3. If I become a candidate, the rating assigned to me by the Committee will be publicly announced. Ratings remain valid for 2 years but are subject to reevaluation upon request.
4. Should I receive a *Not Recommended* rating the Committee will endeavor to notify me prior to a public announcement. If I withdraw from the race, the rating will not be announced, and the questionnaires will not be published.
5. I hereby authorize the Pennsylvania Judicial Conduct Board, the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners to transmit my entire file and record, including confidential information contained therein, to the Allegheny County Bar Association Judiciary Committee. I hereby specifically waive any confidentiality rights I may have in those records.
6. I hereby authorize the Judicial Conduct Board, the Disciplinary Board, and the Board of Law Examiners, or the equivalent, in any jurisdiction where I have practiced, been admitted to practice or have applied to either take a bar examination or for admission to the bar to transmit my entire file and record, including confidential information contained therein, to the Allegheny County Bar Association Judiciary Committee. I hereby specifically waive any confidentiality rights I may have in those records.
7. The Allegheny County Bar Association Judiciary Committee may change, during the course of my campaign for office, the original rating assigned to me for cause.

Heather Schmidt Bresnahan
Heather Schmidt Bresnahan

January 7, 2025
Date

Heather Schmidt Bresnahan
Signature

ACBA JUDICIARY COMMITTEE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LAWYER APPLICANTS

I am seeking a rating for the following court:

- Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas
- Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court
- Pennsylvania Superior Court
- Pennsylvania Supreme Court

1. State your full name and list any other name by which you have ever been known.
Heather Lynn Schmidt Bresnahan, formerly Heather Lynn Schmidt

2. Date and place of birth.
**October 9, 1971
Pittsburgh, PA**

3. Are you a naturalized citizen? If so, give date and place of naturalization.
No

4. Family status:

a) Are you married? If so, state the date of marriage and your spouse's full name, including maiden name, if applicable.

No

b) Have you been divorced? If so, state the date, the number of the case and the court.

**Yes, Divorce Decree dated 11/7/2019
Allegheny County Docket No.: FD 19-008426-009**

5. Have you served in the military? If so,

I have never served in the military.

a) Give dates, branch of service, rank of rate and present status;

b) Have you ever been rejected or released from the armed services for reasons other than honorable? If so, give details.

6. List each college and law school you attended, including dates of attendance, any scholastic honors, and the degrees awarded. If you left any institution without receiving a degree, state the reason for leaving.

Point Park University, 1991-1993: Bachelor of Arts, Cum Laude
Duquesne University School of Law, 1997 – 2001: Juris Doctorate

7. List all jurisdictions in which you have applied to take a bar examination, have applied for admission or have been admitted to practice. Include dates of admissions and if not admitted, give application dates and explain the outcome.

Pennsylvania, Admitted – October 24, 2001

Federal District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania – April 23, 2013

8. List your professional mailing address and telephone number including the name of any associated law firm. Please also list any personal and professional social media usernames and/or handles and any websites you maintain or to which you know that your profile is shared.

Schmidt Bresnahan Law Group, LLC, 750 Washington Road, Ste. 14, Pittsburgh, PA 15228, 412-339-0000, www.hsblawgroup.com

Facebook: Heather Schmidt Bresnahan and Schmidt Bresnahan Law Group, LLC
Instagram: Heatherschmidt1071
BlueSky: @heatherschmidt

Campaign:

Facebook: [facebook.com/61569415637976](https://www.facebook.com/61569415637976)

Instagram: [instagram.com/hsbforjudge2025](https://www.instagram.com/hsbforjudge2025)

Bluesky: <https://bsky.app/profile/heatherforjudge/bsky.social>

9. Describe chronologically your law practice and experience after your graduation from law school, including:

Upon graduating from law school, I continued working full-time as a law clerk for Paul J. Leventon, Esquire, whose practice primarily focused on family law. During my time with Attorney Leventon, I drafted pleadings including motions, pretrial statements, and attended client meetings and trials alongside him. I took approximately four weeks off to study for the bar exam and then returned to work full-time as his law clerk until I passed the bar exam. After becoming licensed, I worked as an associate attorney for Attorney

Leventon until I joined Gary G. Gentile, Esquire as an associate attorney in 2001.

a) Whether you served as clerk to a judge and, if so, the name of the judge, the court, and the dates of the period you were a clerk;
N/A

b) Whether you practiced alone and, if so, the addresses and the dates;
January 1, 2016 – Present: Schmidt Bresnahan Law Group, LLC
January 2016 – August 2018
310 Grant Street, 31st Floor Grant Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

August 2018 – Present
750 Washington Road, Ste. 14, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

c) The dates, names and addresses of law firms or offices, companies or governmental agencies with which you have been connected and the nature of your connection with each; and,

Goldberg, Gruener, Gentile, Horoho & Avalli, P.C.
Associate Attorney to Gary G. Gentile
November 2001 – August 2007
310 Grant Street, 2nd Floor Grant Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Voelker, Gricks & Schmidt, LLC
Partner
310 Grant Street, 1220 Grant Building, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
January 1, 2009 – May 2010

Leger & Ball, PC, now Fiscus & Ball, P.C.
310 Grant Street, Suite 3100, Pittsburgh, PA 15219
May 2010 – December 31, 2015

d) Any other relevant particulars.

10. Regarding your practice:

a) What has been the general character of your practice, dividing it into periods with dates if its character has changed over the years?

I have focused my legal career primarily on Family Law, including matters such

as divorce, child custody, child support, spousal support, alimony pendente lite, alimony, Protection from Abuse, grandparent custody and marital agreements. Additionally, I draft wills and powers of attorney and administer estates for clients, although this constitutes less than 10% of my practice.

I have appeared a few times in criminal court to walk people through the ARD program for DUI's and have attended magistrate hearings on the odd occasion.

Since January 2024, I have been honored to serve as a hearing officer for the Allegheny County Retirement Board. Additionally, I dedicate time each month to volunteering with Neighborhood Legal Services, assisting with their PFA caseload to support individuals in need.

- b) Describe your typical clients and mention the areas in which you have concentrated your practice.

I am proud to represent clients from diverse economic backgrounds, races, nationalities, genders, and sexual orientations. My clients come from a wide range of professions, including stay-at-home parents and CEOs of companies, reflecting the broad spectrum of individuals I am privileged to serve.

I handle a wide range of cases, from custody and simple divorces to complex support and divorce matters that require the involvement of forensic accountants to accurately evaluate net disposable incomes, business valuations and the marital components of pensions and other assets. I represent clients in Protection from Abuse actions both as plaintiffs and defendants. Additionally, I volunteer monthly with Neighborhood Legal Services providing pro bono representation to assist with their caseload.

I have practiced before all of the Judges and hearing officers assigned to the Family Division over the past 23 years. I have represented clients in court for support hearings, Motions, hearings on divorce related matters such as Exclusive Possession of the Marital Residence, Protection from Abuse hearings, Child Custody conciliations, hearings and trials and Equitable Distribution conciliations, hearings and Trials.

The frequency of my court appearances varies, as I prioritize resolving cases outside of court whenever possible, believing that this approach serves my clients' best interests. I avoid bringing unnecessary motions before the court, focusing instead on negotiation and collaboration. When cases do proceed to hearings or trial, they are most often custody matters, as the majority of equitable distribution cases typically settle at the conciliation stage or before trial.

Some examples of cases:

- **I represented a client in a custody matter against the mother of the child and the Seneca Nation of Indians regarding the Indian Child Welfare Act vs. The Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Enforcement Act;**
- **I represented a client in complex litigation over an Antenuptial Agreement and tort settlement proceeds that spanned over the course of 5 years;**
- **I have represented CEO/CFOs of multimillion dollar companies in complex support and divorce involving the hiring of forensic accountants to determine net disposable income and business valuations;**
- **I have represented a client in custody and support that has ongoing litigation for years as the mother of the child represents herself Pro-Se and brings countless motions before the Court of Common Pleas and appeals to the Superior Court of Pennsylvania;**
- **I represented a mother of one of my clients who died during the course of his divorce and had changed the beneficiary of his One Million Dollar life insurance policy to his mother. There was complex ERISA issues involved in this matter.**
- **I have represented multiple clients in custody relocation cases that were successfully tried and won;**

11. Regarding the last ten years:

- a) Did you appear in court regularly, occasionally, or not at all? If the frequency of your appearances in court has varied during this period, describe each such variance, giving the dates thereof;

Typically, I am in court maybe once per week if not more frequently. During the pandemic we were only in court via Microsoft Teams, except for an ongoing case that I had in Westmoreland County which was in person.

- b) What percentage of these appearances was in:
1. Federal courts:
 2. State courts of record: **100%**
 3. Other courts:

c) What percentage of your litigation was:

1. Civil:
2. Criminal:
3. Family: **100%**
4. Orphans' Division:

d) State the number of cases in courts of record you tried to verdict or judgment (rather than settled), indicating whether you were sole counsel, chief counsel or associate counsel.

I have tried thousands of cases to judgment on support or complex support matters. To the best of my recollection, I have tried approximately 25 cases to judgement involving custody and equitable distribution, with 19 of those being custody trials. In all cases, I served as either chief counsel or sole counsel.

e) What percentage of these trials were:

1. Jury:
2. Non-jury: **100%**

12. Summarize your experience in court the last ten years, indicating:

a) Whether your appearances in court were more or less frequent;

Before and after the pandemic, my court appearances have been consistent, typically averaging once per week, though some weeks I appear more frequently.

b) Any significant changes in the percentages stated in your answers to question 11(b), (c) and (e); and,

During the Pandemic, I was rarely in court (except for Westmoreland County cases) and if there were any appearances it was remote via Microsoft Teams;

c) Any significant changes in the number of cases per year in courts of record you tried to verdict or judgment (rather than settled), as sole counsel, chief counsel or associate counsel.

N/A

13. Describe five of the most significant litigated matters which you personally handled (give the citations if the cases were reported and docket numbers if unreported) by providing a capsule summary of each case and a succinct statement of what you believe to be the particular significance of the case; the party or parties whom you represented; the name of the Court, Judge and contact information if known of counsel for any other party; your role in the litigation; and the final disposition

1. ***Rupert v Rupert*, Court of Common Pleas of Butler County, Case No. 2011-90813**

The Honorable Thomas J. Doerr

**Co-Counsel over some of the years:
Graham Montgomery (Associate)
Megan DelVecchio (Associate)**

**Opposing Counsel:
Chris F. Gillotti
223 Fourth Avenue – Suite 500
Benedum Trees Building
Pittsburgh, PA 15222**

**Douglas Linn, II
Linn Law Group
20280 Rt 19 Ste 6
Cranberry Twp, PA 16066**

The parties to this action were Jacqueline Rupert (“Wife”) and Michael T. Rupert (“Husband”). The parties entered into an Antenuptial Agreement 5 days prior to their marriage on April 27, 2002. Following their marriage and prior to their separation, Husband was involved in a tragic automobile accident on May 27, 2010, wherein he suffered horrific injuries including the loss of both legs, one arm and burns over sixty (60%) of his body. Wife sought legal counsel from Thomas W. King, III, (hereinafter referred to as “King”) and his law firm Dillon, McCandless, King, Coulter & Graham, LLP. King prepared the necessary documents to have Wife appointed Guardian of the Estate and of the Person of Husband. Wife signed a Contingent Fee Agreement with King and his firm on behalf of herself and her Husband as his Guardian and Personal Representative on June 1, 2010. Wife began to rely heavily on King and his advice throughout the entire traumatic ordeal and King knew that the parties were having trouble, and

that Wife did not get along with Husband's father who had moved into the marital residence. The parties settled their action against Brayman and signed a Joint Tortfeasor Release on January 11, 2011. The release did not separate the claims of the parties. As Husband did not want Wife to receive any of the proceeds, King had Wife sign an Amended Contingent Fee Agreement giving her 3 ½ percent of the total \$19,000,000.00 settlement or \$692,000.00.

After meeting with Wife, I felt that the settlement proceeds would have been marital if King had not had Wife sign an Amended Contingent Fee Agreement separating her settlement amount from Husband's. It was at that point that I directed Wife to meet with malpractice attorney, Maurice Nernberg, Esquire who handled the malpractice action and Wife's interests in the federal action against Ford Motor Company. I was retained for Wife's divorce action and first had to have the Honorable Thomas Doerr adjudicate on whether the tort settlement proceeds were subject to the Antenuptial Agreement and that but for signing the Amended Contingent Fee Agreement, the entire proceeds would have been marital and subject to equitable distribution. The case was extremely complex and spanned over a period of almost 5 years. The first aspect of the case was to determine whether the tort proceeds would be subject to equitable distribution, the second aspect was a trial to determine the date of separation and the third aspect was to implement the Antenuptial Agreement and determine Wife's entitlement.

The Honorable Thomas Doerr ruled that but for Wife signing the Amended Contingent Fee Agreement the tort proceeds would have been marital and subject to equitable distribution. This was an extremely important ruling as it laid the basis for the malpractice action.

2. *Gibbon v. Bowles*, Court of Common Pleas of Washington County, Civil Division: No. 2014 – 5143

The Honorable Valerie Costanzo

Opposing Counsel: William P. Bishop, Jr., Esquire, Attorney for Mother (Deceased)

Hilda Manuel, General Counsel for the Seneca Nation of Indians

Father brought a custody action for primary custody of the minor child. Mother is a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, and the child was born on the reservation to Mother and later adopted by Father with the consent of the Seneca Nation of Indians. This case involved the Mother of the child and the Seneca Nation of Indians. A hearing was held on the provisions of the Uniform Judicial Child Custody

Enforcement Act, "UCCJEA" to determine jurisdiction over the child custody matter. Father's argument was that Washington County, PA had jurisdiction over the custody matter pursuant to the UCCJEA and counsel for Mother asserted that the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 applied, "ICWA". The Seneca Nation of Indians position was that they had not adopted the UCCJEA and therefore felt that they were not obligated to follow the law.

The Honorable Valerie Costanzo held that the provisions of the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Enforcement Act, Section 5404 (b), which states: Tribe Treated as State was that the Commonwealth should treat a tribe as if it were a state of the United States for applying subchapter (b) relating to jurisdiction. This was a complex legal issue with regard to custody over Native American Children and whether the Indian Child Welfare Act or the Uniform Judicial Child Custody Enforcement Act applied to custody.

3. *Avellino v. Avellino*, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County, FD: 15-001320

Honorable Cathleen Bubash

Opposing Counsel: Stephanie L. Jablon
sjablon@pollockbegg.com
525 William Penn Place
Suite 3501
Pittsburgh, PA, 15219
412-471-9000

Father and Mother were the biological parents of the child, A.A. born, October 5, 2005. At the time, Father was in the military stationed with the United States Air Force. In 2015, while the parties were living in Alaska, the parties split up while Father was still in the military. Mother relocated to Pittsburgh with the children. Father filed for primary custody of the minor child and at the conciliation before the three-day trial, the Judge stated that she didn't know of anything that would change her mind that Mother should not keep primary custody of the child. After discussing it with my client we decided to proceed to trial and at the end of the trial, my client was awarded primary custody, and the child moved with his Father to Wilmington, North Carolina. This case is significant in that we were the total underdogs in the case and after conciliating with the Judge, we never thought that we could win but we prevailed, and the child is extremely happy and doing well in North Carolina.

4. ***Sabakar v Stacy*, Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County,
FD: 18-008202**

Honorable Hugh F. McGough

Mother, Elena Sabakar, is Pro Se in this matter

The parties to this action were married on November 7, 2008, and divorced on November 14, 2018. They are parents to one (1) child born on October 15, 2015. This matter has been in ongoing litigation since 2018 first for custody, then support, and other issues. Initially Mother was represented by counsel, Jeffrey Pollock, Esquire, for the first two-day complex support hearing in 2021. Since 2021, Mother has chosen to represent herself. There have been multiple motions and hearings on complex support, custody, enforcement of divorce settlement agreement, petition for minor's name change to name just a few. This case has now gone to the Superior Court of Pennsylvania on three separate issues (support, name change and citizenship) wherein Mother did not prevail and has now filed appeals to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Mother is a citizen of Russia and the United States. Mother sought to change the minor child's name to add her Russian last name and when she did not prevail on that issue, Mother then sought to enforce a provision of the parties' divorce settlement wherein Father had agreed that he would not prevent Mother from obtaining Russian citizenship for the minor child. This case is significant in that it is consistently ongoing as Mother represents herself so anytime she does not agree with the judge's rulings, she files a Motion for Reconsideration and then when she loses, she files an appeal to the Superior Court and then the Supreme Court. My client certainly cannot afford to keep up with all the litigation and I allow him to just make a monthly payment towards his legal fees as he needs to be represented competently and should not be prejudiced due to the opposing parties' actions.

5. ***Sadauskas v. Neuwirth*, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas,
FD: 10-008958-005**

The Honorable Kathleen R. Mulligan

**Opposing Counsel: Ronald F. Lawry, Esquire
8306 Ohio River Blvd.
Pittsburgh, PA. 15202
Lawrylaw@gmail.com**

The parties to this action were married on February 3, 2010, and separated on November 8, 2010, and the marriage was annulled on September 22, 2011. One child

was born before marriage on October 23, 2009, the subject of the custody trial. The Honorable Kathleen R. Mulligan presided over two (2) trials in this matter, one in 2012 and one in 2015. The initial trial was to determine primary custody of the minor child. The child was born in New Jersey, however Mother then moved to Pittsburgh with the child and married Father. Mother moved back to New Jersey in November 2010. Father sought primary or shared custody of the child also to have the child's name changed to his last name. Psychological evaluations were conducted in this matter and after trial, the Honorable Kathleen R. Mulligan denied the request for the name change and awarded Mother primary custody in New Jersey. This case was significant as the Judge crafted an Order to which the child went back and forth every three weeks between New Jersey and Pennsylvania due to the child's early age and that she was not in school yet. It was a unique custodial arrangement for a young child not of school age that allowed significant bonding with both parents.

14. If a substantial period of your practice has been before administrative boards, commissions or agencies during the past ten years, identify the boards, commissions or agencies before which you have practiced and estimate percentages of practice time devoted thereto.

I serve as a hearing officer for the Allegheny County Retirement Board, an important role that complements my practice, though it doesn't take up a significant portion of my time.

15. If a substantial portion of your practice has been before Appellate courts during the past ten years, identify the Appellate Courts before which you have practiced and estimate percentages of practice time devoted thereto.

N/A

16. Have you ever held judicial office? If so, give dates and details, including the court involved, whether elected or appointed, periods of services and a description of the jurisdiction of each of such courts with any limitations upon the jurisdiction of each court indicating the time(s) that you were the subject of a Motion or Petition for Recusal.

N/A

17. Have you ever held public office other than judicial office? If so, give details, including the office, whether elected or appointed and the length of your service, giving details.

I was elected to serve on the Dormont Borough Council from 2009-2011. In December 2011, I decided to step down to focus on my growing law practice and my recent marriage, allowing me to dedicate more time to both. However, it was a very worthwhile experience that provided me with valuable insight into local government.

18. Have you ever been an unsuccessful candidate for elective, judicial or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.

No.

19. Have you ever been engaged in any occupation, business or profession other than the practice of law or the holding of judicial or other public office? If so, give details, including dates.

Late August 2007 – December 2008 – Medical Sales Representative for Medtronic Heart Valve Sales.

20. Are you now an officer or director or otherwise engaged in the management of any business enterprise?

- a) If so, give details, including the name of your enterprise, the nature of the business, the title or other description of your position, the nature of your duties and the term of your service.

Other than owning my own law firm, I have never been an officer or director of any business enterprise.

- b) Is it your intention to resign such positions and withdraw from any participation in the management of any such enterprises if you are elected and confirmed? If not, give reasons.

Yes.

21. Are you under any ongoing federal, state or local investigation or indictment for possible violation of a criminal statute? If so, give details.

No.

22. Have you ever been charged or convicted of any violation of a local, state or federal law, any misdemeanor or felony, court martialled, been granted immunity from prosecution, been held in contempt of court or been the subject of a final protection from abuse order? If so, give details. Do not include summary traffic offenses.

No.

23. Has a tax lien or other collection procedure been instituted against you by federal, state or local authorities? If so, give details.

In 2016, there was a mix up with my mortgage company during a refinance, as they were to be paying my taxes through my mortgage. Dormont Borough and Allegheny County filed a lien when the mortgage company did not pay and as soon as I was aware that my mortgage company did not pay the taxes, I paid the taxes promptly and the lien was satisfied.

24. Have you ever been sued by a client? If so, give details.

No.

25. Have you ever been a party to or otherwise involved in any other legal proceedings? If so, give the particulars. Do not list proceedings in which you were merely a guardian *ad litem* or stakeholder. Include all legal proceedings in which you were a party in interest, a material witness, were named as co-conspirator or a co-respondent and any grand jury investigation in which you figured as a subject or in which you appeared as a witness.

- **I was named as the Administrator of my grandmother's estate in a wrongful death lawsuit in 2001. The case went to trial, and I testified before the jury. After I testified, the defendants settled the case during the trial. I was not a beneficiary of the estate and did not receive any monies from the settlement.**
- **I was a plaintiff in a PFA action in 2000.**

26. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by, or been the subject of a complaint to, any court, administrative agency, bar association, disciplinary committee or other professional group? If so, give the details.

I had one Disciplinary Board complaint filed against me in 2021. The complaint was filed

two and a half years after my representation ended, and I believe the motivation behind the complaint was the clients' desire not to pay me significant legal fees that were still owed to me. I hired ethics counsel who advised me of his opinion that the complaint was frivolous and should be dismissed. We filed a response to the complaint, after which the complaint was dismissed the following month. My counsel advised me that that was an unusually quick dismissal.

27. Currently or within the past five (5) years have you suffered from any medical or other condition which could affect or impair your judgment, reliability or ability to perform the essential functions of the judicial position you are seeking? If so, describe.

No

28. Do any circumstances exist that would affect your ability to perform the function of the position you seek or fulfill the term of office? If so, please explain.

No

29. Furnish one (1) writing sample that reflects your analysis of a legal problem or issue.

Sample attached

30. List all bar associations and professional societies of which you are a member and give the titles and dates of any offices which you have held in such groups. Please also identify any leadership role you have held in such groups.

- **Allegheny County Bar Association – former council member and chair of the social committee – do not recall the dates – sometime between 2003 – 2006;**
- **Pennsylvania Bar Association**

31. List your experiences in teaching and lecturing, including law school, continuing legal education and to non-legal audiences.

I was a member of the Matrimonial Inns of Court for many years in which we would put on skits about various family law legal issues for other members of the family law section. Additionally, I was on a panel once many years ago for a PBI course. I do not recall the dates due to the remoteness of the time frame.

32. List all organizations other than bar associations, professional associations or societies of which you are or have been a member, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social and fraternal organizations.

Brehon Society of Irish Lawmakers

33. List any honors, prizes, awards or other forms of recognition which you have received (including any indication of academic distinction in college or law school) other than those mentioned in answers to the foregoing questions.

- Point Park College, graduated Cum Laude
- Pennsylvania Super Lawyer “Rising Star” Family Law by *Pennsylvania Law & Politics* (2006) (2001)
- Pittsburgh’s “50 Finest” young professionals by *Pittsburgh Magazine and Cystic Fibrosis Foundation* (2005);

34. State any other information which may reflect positively or adversely on you or which you believe should be disclosed.

I think that it is very relevant that I have been a family law practitioner for over 23 years and that I myself came from a home with separated parents who sometimes did not get along so well. I know what it’s like to be a child from a split family because I have lived that experience. That lived experience has been informative and useful to my family law practice as I deal with clients and their families. My personal experience has put me in a position to have the necessary insight, empathy and understanding of the dynamics of the parents and the challenges faced by the children who have gone through or are going through an exceedingly difficult period of their lives. I have been able to turn my childhood adversity into something that made me an even better family law attorney. That’s a character trait – learning how to turn my own personal adversity into a positive aspect for my clients as a family law attorney – which reflects positively on me as a person.

I also believe that it is relevant that once my father passed away when I was 15, I had to go to work. I worked a part-time job since I was 15 all through high school. After high school, I attended Sawyer School of Business where I obtained my associates degree and then became a travel agent for Royal Travel. Once the Gulf War started, I lost my job and needed to figure out a new career path. Fortunately, I was able to get a full-time job in the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office and enrolled at Point Park College at night to obtain my bachelor's degree. I worked full time during the day and attended school at night. My experience in the District attorney's Office and the work that I did with so many strong and talented DA's and staff motivated me to also become a lawyer. One in particular who was my constant champion is the Honorable Kimberly Clark, who was then an ADA while I was at the DA's office. She inspired me to believe that I too could become an attorney, encouraged me all throughout law school, and helped me achieve my dreams. I went to law school at Duquesne University School of Law while maintaining my full-time job at the DA's office. This character trait – my strong work ethic – also reflects positively on me as a person. I have continued to demonstrate this work ethic through my 23+ years of experience as a family law attorney, including starting my own successful family practice in 2016. If I am fortunate to be elected as a Judge on the Court of Common Pleas, I would bring my dedicated work ethic to the bench and on behalf of the families of Allegheny County.

- 35. Why do you wish to become a Justice or Judge? What strengths do you possess that would particularly well qualify you for such a position?**

I believe that being a Judge would give me an opportunity to make a meaningful and positive difference in the lives of so many people in Allegheny County. I am confident that I can bring my 23 + years of experience as a Family Law Attorney, and my previous experience in the District Attorney's Office to the Allegheny County bench and serve the Court of Common Pleas as a fair and effective Judge. Family Court and Criminal Court cases not only affect the individual going through the case, but entire families and often many others around them. A judge's decision in a custody case, a juvenile dependency

case, or a criminal case can have a ripple effect on generations of a family. These effects can be positive or negative.

In my experience, I have had the privilege of appearing before judges who consistently treat litigants and attorneys with dignity, respect and integrity. These judges embody the values that make our justice system work effectively. I firmly believe that judges play a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the courtroom, and it is important for all parties involved to understand and respect the responsibilities of the presiding judge. At the same time, attorneys have their own responsibilities to their clients, and it's essential for everyone in the courtroom to work collaboratively and with mutual respect. Judges are elected to serve the people of Allegheny County, all the people, and should approach their work with humility and a commitment to fairness for everyone they serve.

I know that I have the experience, qualifications, temperament, compassion, and values necessary to be an incredibly good Judge on the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas. I am a kind, compassionate, and humble person who would treat everyone equally and fairly, regardless of status in life, race, religion, ethnicity, gender/gender identification or sexual orientation. I will truly listen to the litigants and their attorneys. As a Judge, I will work hard, treat everyone with respect, and consider all the facts and evidence before me on every case before applying the facts of record to precedential law.

I have proven myself over 23 + years of experience as an attorney who works hard, is always prepared, respects the Court, and serves my clients well. I believe all of my colleagues and the Judges I've practiced before over the years would agree that I have always been respectful and collegial with colleagues, litigants and court staff.

In conclusion, I am confident that I possess the strengths and character traits that make me well qualified to serve as a Judge on the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County. As I have articulated throughout my responses to this Question and Question #34 above, I bring a combination of insight, empathy, understanding, experience, qualifications,

temperament, integrity, compassion, values and work ethic that would enable me to be an effective, productive, and fair Judge. I am committed to upholding the highest standards of justice, responsibility and fairness, and I truly believe that my unique qualities and dedication would make me an asset to the Allegheny County Court.

36. What do you consider a significant achievement in your life outside your profession?

Please see my answer to question # 34 above.

37. Please identify specific efforts you have made, or been involved with, to support equality and inclusion in the legal profession.

My most important effort in my career to support equality and inclusion in the legal profession can best be described as my own version of “pay it forward.” Throughout my career, and especially in my early years as an attorney, I have been blessed to have been mentored and helped in some way by talented female attorneys. These women provided advice, mentoring, career guidance, fellowship and friendship. As I gained, experience as an attorney and as I started my own firm with the ability to hire my own employees, I have very consciously tried to provide opportunities to empower other women in the legal profession. I have hired female attorneys and female staff. I have provided advice and mentoring to new and younger female attorneys and have always been clear with colleagues that I am available to help advance the career of other female colleagues in any way I can. My commitment has been my own personal way to express gratitude for what others have done for me and to “pay it forward.”

The undersigned certifies that the statements made in this questionnaire are true, complete and correct to the best of his/her knowledge and belief and are made in good faith.

January 7, 2025
Date

Heather Schmidt Bresnahan, Esquire

Heather Schmidt Bresnahan
Signature