

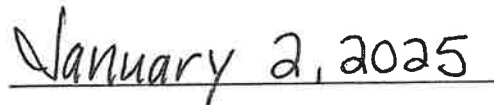
ALLEGHENY COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

JUDICIAL CANDIDATE PLEDGE

I, Michele Kondrad Santicola, 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



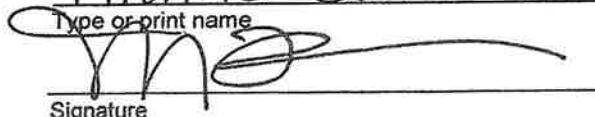
Date

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 If I withdraw from the race, the rating will not be announced, and the questionnaires will not be published.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.

January 2, 2025
Date

Michele Santicola
Type or print name

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.

Michele Kondrad Santicola
Michele Kondrad

2. Date and place of birth.

February 13, 1970, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

3. Are you a naturalized citizen? If so, give date and place of naturalization.

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.

February 8, 2003, Michael Francis Santicola

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

Yes. February 20, 2001, Case No. FD-00-009939, Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas

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

- 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.

No.

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.

Duquesne University – August 1988-May 1992; Bachelor of Arts, *Cum Laude*
Dickinson School of Law – August 1992-May 1995; Juris Doctor

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.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Admitted November 1995.
Western District of Pennsylvania. Admitted November 1995.

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.

Magisterial District Judge Michele Santicola
923 5th Avenue
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania 15108
412-262-3881

Facebook: Michele Kondrad Santicola
Twitter: @dagmlk
Instagram: michelesanticola

9. Describe chronologically your law practice and experience after your graduation from law school, including:
 - 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;
 - b) Whether you practiced alone and, if so, the addresses and the dates;

- 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,

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Attorney General
564 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219
Deputy Attorney General
January 1996-January 1999 – Public Protection Division
January 1999-September 2004 – Criminal Law Division

Sainovich & Santicola
722 Turnpike Street
Beaver, Pennsylvania 15009
Associate
January 2005 – June 2012

Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board
Northwest Office Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17124
Hearing Examiner (*Independent Contractor)
June 2012 – July 2016

Santicola, Steele & Fedeles
722 Turnpike Street
Beaver, Pennsylvania 15009
Associate
July 2016 – December 2019

Magisterial District Court 05-2-25
923 Fifth Avenue
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania 15108
Magisterial District Judge
January 2020 – present

- d) Any other relevant particulars.

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Criminal Rules Committee
Member 2020 – present
Vice Chair – January 2025

Transition Team
Bradley Foulk, Erie County District Attorney

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?

It is challenging to characterize my practice because it has been so varied. I began my career in the public sector, handling primarily civil cases in the Public Protection Division of the Attorney General's Office. I argued cases in Courts of Common Pleas as well as the Commonwealth Court as a court of original jurisdiction in consumer protection cases. I moved to the Criminal Law Division where I tried bench and jury trials in addition to arguing cases before the Superior Court. I also regularly presented cases to the Statewide Investigating Grand Jury. In January 2005, I entered the private sector and represented defendants in criminal matters. (I consider myself very fortunate that in my career, I have represented the Commonwealth as well as the accused. I believe this experience on both sides of cases prepared me well for my current role as a Magisterial District Judge.) In June of 2012, I became a Hearing Examiner for the Liquor Control Board. In that quasi-judicial role, I presided over administrative hearings, ruled on evidentiary issues and wrote complex opinions supporting my findings. In January 2020, I became a Magisterial District Judge. As such, I have handled hundreds of Preliminary Arraignments, setting bond and bond conditions. I have presided over Landlord Tenant cases and had the awesome responsibility of determining whether a tenant would be evicted from his or her home. I have presided over wide ranging issues in Civil cases. Although there is a \$12,000.00 jurisdictional limit at the MDJ level, that amount is significant, and the issues are often complex and the litigants pro se and emotional. Making certain that every litigant is heard, respected and respectful of the process and his or her opponent often presents a challenge. I have presided over thousands of traffic citation hearings. This part of the job is also a big responsibility since most times, one's livelihood is dependent upon his or her driver's license. I also preside over Summary trials. Like traffic cases, in non-traffic summary cases, I determine guilt or innocence. I have also presided over many preliminary hearings in criminal matters, including many homicide cases, ruling on evidentiary issues and deciding whether a defendant will stand trial. Finally, I determine whether probable cause exists to issue warrants, summonses and search warrants in criminal matters.

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

My typical private practice clients were criminal defendants. I represented clients in DUI, sex assault, assault, domestic violence and white-collar crime and grand jury appearances. In addition, I represented liquor license establishments regarding compliance and licensing issues.

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;

I have appeared in court regularly over the past ten years. As a sitting Magisterial District Judge, I have appeared in court at least three days a week for the past five years. In the preceding five years, I regularly presided over administrative hearings for the Liquor Control Board. In addition, I represented clients at the MDJ and Common Pleas levels and in the Grand Jury.

- b) What percentage of these appearances was in:

1. Federal courts: 0
2. State courts of record: 25
3. Other courts: 75

- c) What percentage of your litigation was:

1. Civil: 60
2. Criminal: 40
3. Family: 0
4. Orphans' Division: 0

- 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.

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- e) What percentage of these trials were:

1. Jury: 0
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;

Less frequent in Courts of Common Pleas but more frequent in Magisterial District Court and administrative hearings.

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

- 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.

Yes. When I became a Hearing Examiner and then a Magisterial District Judge, my appearances in courts of record significantly dropped; however, my administrative and Magisterial District Court appearances significantly increased. I regularly, even daily, appear and make rulings and decisions based on the rules of evidence and the law.

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. I was co-counsel with Deputy Attorney General Dennis Kistler on an 18 month Statewide Investigating Grand Jury case into a suspected health care fraud ring. Throughout the course of the investigation, I supervised the investigating agents, prepared and questioned numerous witnesses before the Grand Jury, reviewed and presented voluminous, complex documentary evidence to the Grand Jury, traveled out of state to interview and prepare witnesses and worked closely with several medical experts, providers and employees to untangle the complex issues in the case. I applied for and was granted sealed search warrants (Judge William Cunningham, Erie County Court of Common Pleas) and was present when they were executed. I believe the case was significant in its complexity and its outcome. Ultimately, we determined that criminal charges were not appropriate, and the matter was resolved civilly. I believe this determination shows my ability to objectively evaluate a case. Although much time was spent on this investigation, ultimately, I did not believe criminal charges were

warranted, and justice demanded I decline to prosecute.

2. I represented a high school student who was accused of date rape. Following a lengthy preliminary hearing, the charges were held for court. I requested and was granted access to the accuser's cell phone. I hired a firm to do a data dump and spent in excess of 20 hours reading every text message, which was a separate file. I found messages in which the accuser admitted that the encounter was consensual. I presented the information to the District Attorney's Office and Judge Bickett, and the case was dismissed. This case taught me several important lessons. First, I learned a lot about the media and its effect on defendants. The story was covered on television and in the newspapers. Although the charges were dismissed, the media footprint remains. Second, I learned that defendants who have the means to hire investigators, although few and far between, are at a great advantage. Third, I witnessed first-hand the aftermath of the ordeal on an innocent defendant. These lessons will always remain, and I think of them often as I sit in judgment of others.
3. I prosecuted a man who was perpetrating an expensive and ongoing worker's compensation fraud. The case involved extensive medical issues, records and testimony. The jury trial was presided over by the Honorable Marilyn Horan in the Butler County Court of Common Pleas. Following a weeklong trial, the defendant was convicted and sentenced to jail.
4. In the Somerset County Court of Common Pleas, I prosecuted a fraud case before the Honorable Kim Gibson. The case was document intensive and required both expert and lay witness testimony. During the course of the trial, I proved that the defendant offered a forged document into evidence. Ultimately, the jury convicted the defendant.
5. I represented a defendant who was charged with DUI based upon a report by a lay witness. The defendant was arrested in his home ninety minutes later. He refused to submit to chemical testing and was charged with DUI based solely on the eyewitness account of his behavior. Following a trial before the Honorable David R. Cashman, my client was acquitted. This case presented interesting issues as the charge was based solely on a lay witness' observations, and the defendant was at home, drinking a beer at the time of the arrest.

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.

A significant percentage of my practice between June 2012 and June 2016 was as a Hearing Examiner for the Liquor Control Board.

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.
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.

Yes. I was elected Magisterial District Judge, District 05-2-25, on November 5, 2019, and I was sworn in in January, 2020. As an MDJ, I preside over civil actions, with a jurisdictional limit of twelve thousand dollars, Landlord Tenant disputes, traffic citations, nontraffic summary cases and preliminary hearings in criminal matters. I also handle preliminary arraignments and grant or deny search warrants, arrest warrants and summonses in criminal matters. I have recused myself from cases on several occasions, including when my husband represented a party, when a defendant threatened my family and when a party was a close family friend.

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 the Board of Supervisors in Moon Township in November 2017. As a member of the Board, I worked on many important issues that impacted the community, including zoning, planning, employee contracts and overseeing a \$16 million budget. I proudly served until I became a Magisterial District Judge in 2020.

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.

No.

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

No.

- 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.
- 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.

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.

No.

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 a co-defendant in a lawsuit brought in 2003 in Federal Court in the Middle District of Pennsylvania by an agent under my supervision in the Office of Attorney General. The case was dismissed on a Motion for Summary Judgment.

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.

No.

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.

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
Amen Corner

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

I regularly guest lecture at Duquesne University School of Law and Robert Morris University. I have presented CLE classes for the Erie County Bar Association. I have lectured at the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University, Beaver campus.

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.

I was a collegiate and alumna member of the Zeta Tau Alpha fraternity. I was awarded Most Outstanding Member of the national organization in 1992. As an alumna, I became a Province President and oversaw five chapters in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

I have been an active member of the Parent Teacher Organizations in my children's schools.

I was a Trustee of the Moon Area Education Foundation from 2018 – 2020. The MAEF raised money and gave grants to teachers with innovative ideas not funded by the district. In addition, we gave scholarships to worthy students for post-secondary education, including college and trade schools.

I was a Board Member of the Coraopolis Community Development Foundation from 2020-2022. The CCDF funds local development initiatives and runs the local food bank.

I was a member of the State Committee of the Special Court Judges Association from 2020-2023.

I am a member of St. Lucy's Auxiliary to the Blind which raises money to benefit the greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind.

I am a volunteer for the Coraopolis Food Bank. I volunteer every other Sunday, delivering food to the needy in our community.

I volunteer at the Mooncrest Community Center after school program for children.

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.

I was named Most Outstanding Senior at Duquesne University in 1992.

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

My husband and I became guardians and were given custody of a young man approximately a year ago. We learned from staff at our local high school that he needed a family, and we met with our children and together we decided that we would be his family. Although it's not always easy and has been a financial challenge at times, we have been more blessed by him than he by us.

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 want to be a Judge because I believe I can make a positive difference in many ways. When I was a law student and young lawyer, I believed that the law was black and white. Thankfully, early in my career, I met a wonderful mentor who set me straight and led me on the right path. He taught me to respect not only the process, but the people involved in it, including opposing counsel and defendants. Over the years, I have never forgotten his wise counsel. I want to make sure every litigant is treated with respect and win or lose, they feel respected and heard. The best part of my job as an MDJ is being able to help people. From protecting victims to helping set people on the right path, I strive to make a positive difference every day. When I am able to hear someone's story and guide them to the resources they need to improve their situation, it is a good day. I often refer people to drug, alcohol or mental health treatment. I direct people in need to help through the food bank. Being an active member of our community allows me to know how and where to help. I also know the importance of holding people accountable, no matter how difficult that sometimes is.

I believe my years of experience on all sides has prepared me well and allows me to bring a unique and balanced perspective to the issues. I have been a prosecutor and a defense attorney. I have been a Hearing Examiner and a Magisterial District Judge. I have served in municipal government. I have volunteered in many ways and for many years. As a parent of teenagers, I have learned patience and understanding. I believe the length and breadth of my experience in governmental practice, private practice and life have prepared me for this challenge.

I have a strong work ethic and will always devote my time and energy to doing the right thing for the right reasons.

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

Until last year, I would have said my volunteer work. My work with the food bank is often physically and emotionally exhausting. However, after becoming a guardian, I can say for sure that becoming a mom again tops my list. Knowing that this wonderful child now has a family who loves and cares for him and all that that means to him is one of the greatest joys of my life. I have taken him on college visits, which prior to joining our family, he never thought would be possible. I am proud of my children for the

sacrifices they willingly make for him. Changing his life for the better and giving him a loving, safe home is one of my life's most significant achievements.

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

I have mentored young female college students, law students and lawyers. I have helped college students with shadowing opportunities, law school applications and LSAT preparation. I have provided shadowing, mentoring and networking opportunities to young law students and lawyers.

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.

Michele K. Santicola

Type or print name



Signature

January 2, 2025

Date

4869-3368-4484, v. 1