



Jill Karofsky

1) Why are you running for the Wisconsin Supreme Court?

We need to get our state and our country back on track. Too many current justices see themselves as agents of conservative ideology and as agents of the Republican Party. I don't hold with that point of view. We need leaders who will put our strong Wisconsin political tradition of independent and honest courts first.

I have strong Wisconsin values. I believe in our Progressive traditions of independent courts and nonpartisan local officials, strong public schools and infrastructure, protecting our beautiful natural resources, deep respect for workers and labor rights, and treating everyone with respect. Everyone deserves dignity as a human being, regardless of race, gender identity, ethnicity, first language, immigration status, or who they love.

It's distressing to me that we live in a time when far-right political forces seek to roll back the advances in civil and human rights we've made in the last few generations. I want to continue to defend the rights of all Wisconsinites. I can best do that by becoming a Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice.

2) What makes you better qualified to serve as a Supreme Court justice than the other candidates?

I have much more experience practicing law and in courtrooms than either of my opponents. I am the only candidate in the race who is or ever was a sitting trial judge, which is a characteristic voters want to see. I am the only candidate to have a career as a prosecutor and the only candidate to have worked in victim advocacy. I have deep experience in both civil and criminal courts, and I've

litigated and overseen hundreds of trials and participated in thousands of cases, which neither of my opponents can claim. I served as Executive Director of Wisconsin's Office of Crime Victim Services for more than six years, and as the first Violence Against Women Resource Prosecutor before that. I spent many years as an Assistant District Attorney and Deputy District Attorney. I also teach courses at UW Law School.

My right-wing opponent, Dan Kelly, claims to believe in a strict originalist interpretation of the Constitution. First of all, I do not believe we can or should strictly interpret a document that was written over 200 years ago and apply it in every case to today's society. One must apply the law in the real world. The founders didn't anticipate mass shootings with assault rifles in schools, or climate change, or a super-computer in everyone's pocket, among other issues.

I believe in the rule of law and that the law must be stable and predictable. That means I can't always rule the way Democrats or liberals want, but my values do come into play because I believe the rule of law requires fairness, consistency, dignity for all people and an expectation that real people have rights (as opposed to corporations or right-wing political movements being supreme.)

Finally, I am the only woman in this race, and I am the only candidate who has ever won an election.

3) What is your approach to deciding cases?

My approach is pretty simple. I look at the facts of the case, I apply the relevant statutes, the relevant case law and precedent, and the U.S. and Wisconsin Constitution. My primary responsibility is to be a fair and impartial judge of Wisconsin law. The courts must behave with integrity and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. It is not the role of the court to make law, but to interpret it, with respect to the impact of the law on people's lives. Our laws are not just words in dusty books. They must be considered thoughtfully and in the context of each unique case. I am committed to the rule of law, to an independent judiciary, and to applying the Constitution fairly and equitably to today's world. As justice, I will continue to adhere to this philosophy.

We must return integrity to the court system. Our judges and justices should hold themselves to the highest standard when it comes to conflicts of interest. I think we need a strong recusal rule, and the way to get there is an open and transparent process with public hearings.

4) Do you have an overarching judicial philosophy?

Here's what Shirley Abrahamson says: "My judicial philosophy is to examine the facts, the law, and the precedent. You apply the facts to the law and the precedent as you understand them, and you reach a decision."

Let me add to that: I believe everyone who walks into a courtroom should be treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. I am committed to the rule of law, to an independent judiciary, and to applying the Constitution fairly and equitably to today's world.

I believe strongly that the judiciary is and should be independent of the partisan branches of government. We should apply the law and the constitution and do so without fear or favor. Right-wing and corporate special interests have unfortunately captured the judicial branch of Wisconsin government and we need to change that and restore the Progressive tradition of independent, non-partisan courts.

So here's what is important. The courts play multiple key roles. First, we are a place to resolve disputes, although it would be better if fewer disputes came to court. Second, we resolve and address criminal behavior, and protect the rights of the accused. Third, our experience in both civil and criminal law can and should inform policy-makers so they can make better judgments about laws, statutes, administrative rules, and government programs.

5) What are some of the important issues that you believe might come before the court the next few years?

The courts have become a partisan playground and far-right forces want to use the courts to enforce their radical ideology. So on issues from education, to healthcare, to voting rights, to civil rights, to workers' rights, to protecting the environment, the courts must be fair, independent, and must apply the law and interpret the constitution fairly. For example, when it is time to draw the maps for state legislative districts, there may be conflict between the governor and the legislature. This conflict may be decided in the courts. If elected, I will endeavor to apply the law fairly and ensure that all Wisconsin voters have a fair ability to affect our democracy.

6) What experience or knowledge do you have with federal Indian law and the rights of Native Americans and Indian tribes?

During my time as Executive Director for the Office of Crime Victim Services, I assisted tribal members who were victims of crime. We made sure these victims received the services, support and help they needed as their cases were winding through the criminal justice system.

I believe deeply in Wisconsin and want to see Wisconsin grow and prosper. This includes the Native Americans whose ancestors were here long before white people arrived. My goal isn't to carry forward a political agenda like the incumbent, but rather to respect the rule of law, give the people of Wisconsin confidence in our judiciary, and ensure the law is predictable and stable. I would

greatly appreciate the friendship and support of Wisconsin's Native American community.