



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF THE
PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

186 NEWINGTON ROAD
WEST HARTFORD, CT 06110

PAUL J. KNIERIM
Probate Court Administrator

THOMAS E. GAFFEY
Chief Counsel

HELEN B. BENNET
Attorney

HEATHER L. DOSTALER
Attorney

TEL (860) 231-2442

FAX (860) 231-1055

ctprobate.gov

MEMORANDUM

TO: Candidates for Probate Judge

FROM: Paul J. Knierim
Probate Court Administrator

DATE: August 12, 2016

RE: November 8, 2016 Special Election of Probate Judges

As you know, there will be a special election on Tuesday, November 8, 2016 to elect Probate Judges for the West Hartford and the Northern Fairfield County Probate Courts. In an effort to inform potential candidates of some of the requirements for this position, we have posted the following materials on the Probate Court website (ctprobate.gov) under the link Candidates for Probate Judge:

1. *Minimum Standards for Probate Judges* adopted by the Connecticut Probate Assembly and the Probate Court Administrator
2. The *Code of Probate Judicial Conduct*
3. Connecticut General Statutes section 45a-18 (e), which requires that a candidate for probate judge be a member of the Connecticut Bar
4. Connecticut General Statutes section 45a-27 and Regulation 26, outlining the training program required for newly elected judges, together with the continuing education requirements for all probate judges
5. Connecticut General Statutes sections 45a-25 and 45a-26 limiting the practice of judges, and the judge's partners and associates, respectively, before Probate Courts
6. Materials from a seminar on *Campaign Ethics*, presented by the Connecticut Probate Assembly Ethics Committee
7. User Guides about various areas of Probate Court jurisdiction

In deciding to run for probate judge, candidates need to be aware of the demanding nature of the position. As identified in the *Minimum Standards for Probate Judges*, the

judge needs to devote the necessary time and attention to judicial functions and court operations to ensure effective, efficient and expeditious service.

All courts are required to be open 40 hours per week. While judges are not prohibited from outside employment, candidates should plan to commit the majority of the workweek to court duties. Canon 3 of the Code of Probate Judicial Conduct obligates the judge to perform all the duties of the office in a diligent and prompt manner. The Code further provides that a judge's judicial duties must take precedence over all other activities.

Successful candidates need to be aware that they are required to participate in an intensive 40-hour training program. All-day educational programs have been scheduled immediately following the election. The first meeting will be at 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 10 in the library at the Office of the Probate Court Administrator (PCA), (*directions attached*). All additional seminars will be conducted at this office. Attendance at these seminars is mandatory for newly elected judges.

In addition, the continuing judicial education requirements under the statutes and Regulation 26 mandate that the judges maintain their skills by earning 15 hours of credit each year. All 15 hours must be earned by the personal attendance of the judge at courses of approved continuing education instruction. Eight of these hours must be sponsored by the Probate Court Administrator or the Connecticut Probate Assembly.

Lastly, candidates should pay particular attention during the election process to Canon 5 of the Code, which relates to political activities and campaign fundraising. The materials from the Campaign Ethics presented by the Probate Assembly Ethics Committee will provide candidates with further guidance.

We would be pleased to answer more specific questions about the role and the responsibilities of a judge of probate. Feel free to contact me, Thomas Gaffey, Chief Counsel, or Attorney Bonnie Bennet.