



CARA CONNORS

Circuit Judge, District 6, Division 12

Prior to her current work as a criminal defense and domestic relations attorney, Connors worked as a hearing examiner for the Appeals Tribunal, a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, and a revocation hearing judge for the Arkansas Parole Board.

How do you define justice?

Justice is where despite a person's race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic class, and/or sexual orientation one's rights are not encumbered, abridged, or otherwise infringed upon by systematic abuses.

Can you explain your judicial philosophy in plain English?

I do not have judicial philosophy per se but I plan to approach each case with impartiality and with an open mind to hear the facts of the case and rule fairly.

What are the biggest changes you think we need to make to the criminal justice system?

As a litigator in the criminal justice system, I know firsthand that there are many changes that are necessary and imminent. The biggest change I would recommend would be expanding the community's access to justice and ensuring, despite one's plight in life and historical deprivations, information, services, and resources are available to every sect of a population.

What role should money/cash bail play in pretrial release?

Arkansas Crim Procedure Rule 9.2 determines the role cash bail plays in pretrial release, which states specifically Rule 9.2 - Release on Money Bail, Ark. R. Crim. P. 9.2, " The judicial officer shall set money bail only after he determines that no other conditions will reasonably ensure the appearance of the defendant in court."

To what extent do you believe that a judge should or should not defer to the actions of a legislature?

Like the Constitution of the United States, that of Arkansas provides for executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The judicial branch interprets the law of the legislature, and judicial review allows judges to determine the constitutionality of the laws enacted by legislature. Judges should exercise this review when appropriate.

Do you believe that policies criminalizing drug use in Arkansas have been effective or ineffective?

Judges do not legislate or determine policies, therefore policies criminalizing drug use are not determined on the bench. However, judges have discretion to impose dispositional alternatives which can offer services to help eradicate and address drug use as a disease rather than penalizing those who suffer from drug addiction.

What factors do you believe are driving the growing prison population and the overrepresentation of people of color and poor Arkansans? What role do judges play in addressing these disparities?

The disparate impact of certain laws and the historically biased decision making of those in positions of authority have led to growing prison populations of people of color and low-economic communities. Judges have a duty to set aside their personal biases and educate themselves on the cultural context of all litigants before them.

In what ways will you work to promote public transparency within your courtroom?

Judges are elected by the people for the people. As judge, I would hold the constitutional guarantees that ensure a public hearing and freedom of information. It is the job of the judiciary to ensure that justice is accessible to all and the public is aware of the moving parts in our judicial system.

How would you make determinations on fines/fees in your courtroom?

Any penalty of fines or fees applicable under the law, must be determined on a case-by-case analysis.

How would you make determinations on fines/fees in your courtroom?

I would review each matter that assess fines per the statute on a case by cases basis.

Would you support eliminating the \$10 monthly automation fee? Why or why not?

My job as judge would be to interpret and to determine the applicability of all laws.