GEAUGA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Candidate:

This questionnaire seeks detailed information from candidates (contested and uncontested) for office, including incumbents seeking re-election. Only a copy of the completed questionnaire will be included in the correspondence to our members when they receive their bar poll ballot.

Responding to these questions will require significant time and effort on your part. We believe the information requested will help our members give the public thoughtful and accurate ratings of candidates. Your responses are an opportunity to demonstrate you are or would be the kind of candidate we all want for our clients and our community. We appreciate your time, and your true, honest, and candid answers. Do not, however, disclose information you are required to keep confidential, or that is subject to attorney-client privilege, attorney work product, or any other privileges or protections.

If a candidate chooses not to submit the questionnaire, the ballot will indicate the candidate refused to participate.

Please answer all applicable questions and sign the jurat and the waiver.

GENERAL

1. Name: Judge Marilyn Zayas

2. a. City and county of residence: Cincinnati, Hamilton County.

   b. How long have you lived in Ohio? 38 years.

   c. How long have you lived in the jurisdiction in which you seek office? 38 years.

3. Business address: 545 East Town Street

   City: Columbus State: Ohio Zip: 43215

   Business Phone: 513-607-7259

4. Place and date of birth: New York City, November 30, 1964.

5. Court for which you are a candidate: Ohio Supreme Court

6. Commencement of term: January 1, 2027

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE EDUCATION

7. School Name:	Years: Attended:	Degree Received:	Honors (if any):
University of Cincinnati, College of Law	1994-1997	J.D.	Dean's List Fall 1995, Spring 1996, Fall 1996, and Spring 1997
City College of New York – CCNY	1982-1987	B.S. in Computer Science	

WORK HISTORY AND PROFESSIONAL ADMISSIONS:

8. State your legal work history since graduating law school in chronological order, listing each employer, the employer's address, your position, and the time period you were so employed. Also include the same information for any period of time during which you were self-employed. **In the alternative, you may attach a résumé if it contains all of the requested information**, or if you supplement any missing information in your response here.

Dates:	Position:	Employer Name and City, State:
2016 – Present	Judge, Ohio's First District Court of Appeals, Hamilton County, Ohio, Judge by special assignment at Ohio's Second, Sixth, Tenth, and Eighth District Courts of Appeals.	
April 2025	Judge by special assignment at Ohio's Supreme Court for *In the Matter of the Application of the Dayton Power and Light Company.*	
April 2025	Judge by special assignment at Ohio's Supreme Court for *In the Matter of the Application of the Dayton Power and Light Company*.	
March 2025	Judge by special assignment at Ohio's Supreme Court for *In the Matter of the Application of Kingwood Solar I, LLC.*	
June 2018	Judge by special assignment at Ohio's Supreme Court for *State v. Vega*, 2018-Ohio-825.	
2000 - 2016	Attorney/Founder, MZD Law, Cincinnati, Ohio.	
2014 - 2015	Adjunct Professor, University of Cincinnati College of Law.	
1998 - 2001	Trial Attorney, Hamilton County Public Defender's Office, Hamilton County, Ohio.	
1997 - 1998	Attorney - Intellectual Property Litigator and Labor & Employment Law, Holland & Hart LLP, Denver, Colorado.	

9. List the date(s) you were admitted to the bar of any state and your current status as a bar member. Identify any period during which you were not in good standing in each bar, and the reason. Please also list the date of your admission to all courts and administrative bodies having special requirements to which you have been admitted to practice, your current status and the dates and reason for any period during which you were not in good standing.

   Ohio Bar – 1999 (Active/Good standing)

   Colorado Bar – 1997 (Inactive – returned to Ohio)

   U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit – 2005 (Inactive - since elected as Judge)

   U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio – 2000 (Inactive - since elected as Judge)

10. (a) Are you currently serving as a judge or magistrate? Judge - Ohio Court of Appeals

    (b) Are you currently engaged in the practice of law? Only as a Judge

(c) If you are NOT currently engaged in either the practice of law or serving as a judge or magistrate,

(1) Make sure to complete Question 23 for your most recent six years of legal practice.

(2) Describe how your current work is relevant to your performance in the judicial office you seek.

HONORS AND AWARDS:

11. List any fellowships, honorary degrees, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships, military awards, and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

- October 11, 2024, the Hamilton County Board of Commissioners officially proclaimed "Judge Marilyn Zayas Day" in recognition of impartial decision-making, outstanding leadership, and commitment to inspiring students and young leaders.
- Hispanic National Bar Association 2024 Woman Judge of the Year
- Recognized by Good Morning America as a GMA 2021 Inspiration List honoree for judicial excellence and commitment to the next generation through community education and mentorship.
- City of Cincinnati City Council Women's History Month Honoree, 2021.
- YWCA Career Women of Achievement Award, 2019.
- University of Cincinnati Nicholas Longworth III Alumni Achievement Award, 2017, for outstanding community contributions.

BAR ASSOCIATION AND OTHER MEMBERSHIPS

12. List all professional, business, fraternal, sororal, scholarly, civic, charitable, or other organizations to which you belong, or to which you have belonged, since graduation from law school. Please include bar associations, clubs, working groups, advisory or editorial boards, panels, committees, or conferences. Provide dates of membership or participation, and indicate any offices you held, and/or your noteworthy accomplishments in connection with the organization.

- Ohio Court of Appeals Judges Association, 2016 – Current.
- Ohio State Bar Association, 2017 – Current.
- Cincinnati Bar Association, 2017 – Current.
- U.C. College of Law Dean's Advisory Board, 2020 – 2026.
- Board member of Beech Acres Parenting Center, 2015 – 2025.
- Member of FBI Citizen's Academy Alumni Association.

PUBLIC OFFICE

13. List chronologically any elected or appointed public offices you have held or sought, other than judicial offices, including the terms of service, and whether such positions were elected or appointed. If appointed, please include the name of the individual or entity that appointed you.

None.

LAW PRACTICE

Answer each part separately. FOR JUDGES WHO WILL, AS OF JANUARY 2022, HAVE *COMPLETED* AT LEAST ONE *FULL* TERM OF SERVICE, THIS QUESTION IS OPTIONAL.

14. For your current or most recent law practice, and every distinctive period of practice in the past, whether or not with a different office, describe:

(a) the general character of your law practice;

(b) your typical clients and or matters, and the legal areas, if any, on which you have focused.

(c) The percentage of your practice in litigation and whether you appear in court frequently, occasionally, or not at all.

(d) The percentage of your practice in: federal courts _____%; state courts of record _____%; other courts _____%; and administrative agencies _____%.

(e) The percentage of your practice in: civil proceedings _____%; and criminal proceedings _____%.

15. Estimate the number of cases in courts of record, including cases before administrative-law judges, you have tried to verdict, judgment, or final decision (rather than settled), indicating whether you were sole counsel, chief counsel, or associate counsel, and

What percentage or numbers of these trials were: jury % and non-jury %.

16. How many cases have you appeared as counsel of record in an Ohio County Court of Common Pleas?

17. Roughly how many physical appearances have you made in the Geauga County Court of Common Pleas?

18. Describe your practice, if any, before state and federal intermediate courts of appeals, the Ohio Supreme Court or the U.S. Supreme Court.

OTHER LAW RELATED ACTIVITIES

19. Pro Bono Work. The Statements on Professionalism adopted by the Supreme Court of Ohio, and the Court's September 20, 2007, Statement Regarding Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services by Ohio Lawyers encourage Ohio lawyers to help provide the pro bono representation that is necessary to make our system of justice available to all. Describe what you have done to fulfill these responsibilities, including the types of matters handled, when you did this work and an estimate of the time you devote to pro bono work each year.

- Creator and Director of Educating Tomorrow's Leaders, an educational and inspirational program for high school, undergraduate, and law students to learn about Ohio's courts, engage with judges, and be inspired to dream big and realize that they can overcome any obstacle. Hosted over 2000 students throughout Ohio including East High School in Youngstown and Saint Martin de Porres High School in Cleveland. 2017 - Current.

- Since 2023, participated in the Clermont County Chamber of Commerce Speed Mentoring Program, which introduces high school juniors and seniors to a wide range of career opportunities through direct interaction with professionals.

- Since its inception in 2024, partnered with the University of Cincinnati College of Law's G.E.N.E.S.I.S. Program. This innovative initiative supports incoming law students who are the first in their families to attend law school, providing them with mentorship, resources, and guidance as they begin their legal education.

- As an attorney, for several years partnered with various Ohio law enforcement agencies in various jurisdictions to develop policies that encouraged victims to report crimes and participate in court proceedings, efforts that help protect entire communities.

20. Teaching. Describe your teaching experience, if any, including school or sponsoring institution, the years you taught the course, and the subject matter. If you have a syllabus for any such course, please attach it.

- CLE Presenter for Hamilton County Prosecutor's Office Annual Conference, "Practical guidance on avoiding common procedural and substantive pitfalls," Fall 2025.

- CLE Presenter for Annual First District Court of Appeals Conference, "Standards of Review," Fall 2025.

- Northeast Lawyers Club, A – Z The Art of Appeals, CLE Presenter, May 2017.

- Ohio State Highway Patrol's Hispanic Leadership Conference, Co-Keynote Speaker with Anthony Munoz, former Bengals football player, 2017.

- Cincinnati American Jewish Committee "America's Table" Thanksgiving Luncheon, Keynote Speaker, 2018.

- University of Cincinnati College of Law, Adjunct Professor, Immigration Law, 2014-2015.

21. Other. Please describe any other significant professional activity you wish to call to our attention. This may include service on Ohio Supreme Court Boards, Commissions, or Task Forces; your involvement in any professional or community organizations; and the like.

- Appointed to sit on our Ohio Supreme Court (for recused Justices) by the Chief Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court.

- Served as a Commissioner on the Ohio Supreme Court Board on Character & Fitness from December 2018 to February 2022.

PAST CONDUCT

22. Have you ever been disciplined for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct by any court, or by the disciplinary authority for any profession in which you also hold a license? YES_____ NO_X_. If so, please give the particulars including the year, complainant, nature of complaint, findings, and sanction, and provide a copy of relevant opinions and orders.

GOALS AND OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

23. Why do you aspire to be a judge?

I am Committed to the Rule of Law

I aspire to serve as a Justice on the Ohio Supreme Court because Ohioans deserves a court defined by integrity, impartiality, and independence. Every case should be decided solely on the United States Constitution, the Ohio Constitution, the law, and the facts, free from political bias and outside influence.

As a judge, I uphold lawful arrests, order a new trial when significant constitutional errors occur, and support initiatives to resolve cases more quickly while using fewer public resources. This approach has earned trust and respect from lawyers and litigants across party lines.

My commitment to these principles stems from my life experiences and the values instilled by my remarkable mother. Raised in a neighborhood plagued by drugs and crime, she had only a seventh-grade education and worked in a sewing factory to raise her four children. From her, I learned hard work, perseverance, and personal integrity, values she passed to all her children. My three brothers all chose careers in public service: my oldest brother served 20 years as a police officer until he was severely injured when a drunk driver collided into the back of his cruiser; he also suffers from 9/11-related lung disease after assisting in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. My other two brothers both became teachers and their dedication to protecting and educating others reflects the compassion and sense of duty our family has embraced.

These early lessons prepared me and were reinforced during my career as an IT manager at Procter & Gamble, where I developed strong analytical and problem-solving skills, and through nearly twenty years as an attorney, where I litigated cases and advocated for individuals from all walks of life. Together, these experiences have given me a practical understanding of how the law impacts Ohio families and the importance of applying common sense with legal precedent to resolve complex issues fairly.

When I first sought judicial office, I entered as a complete political outsider. Despite the challenges, my goal was straightforward: to help ensure our courts deliver justice efficiently and decide cases based only on the law, free from hidden or political agendas.

In 2025, I was selected three times within 40 days by the Chief Justice (who is associated with a different political party) to serve as a visiting judge on the Supreme Court in place of a recused justice, an unprecedented honor.

Today, rebuilding public trust in our courts is more important than ever. To do so, I pledge to approach every case with integrity and courage, and to decide matters based strictly on the facts, the law as written, our federal and state Constitutions, not politics.

It will be a profound honor to serve you on the Ohio Supreme Court and continue upholding the rule of law for all Ohioans.

24. What changes, if any, would you make if elected to the Bench? If you are an incumbent seeking re-election, what specifically would you change as a judge during your next term of office if elected once again to the Bench? Incumbents should specify any tools or techniques that he or she has used to improve the efficiency of the docket and trial calendar.

I will Strengthen Public Safety

Ohio currently stands as the ninth highest state in the United States in terms of overdose drug fatalities. This must change and I will work with the Chief Justice to expand Veterans Courts, Mental Health Courts, and Drug Courts throughout Ohio. These specialized dockets improve public safety by combining accountability with treatment.

Bringing my real-life experiences will help our Ohio Supreme Court effectively address the pressing challenges facing our state, including combating Ohio's high drug overdose rate and violent juvenile crime, through balanced, accountable, and effective legal solutions.

I will Improve Transparency

I will also promote greater transparency through meaningful court data including initiatives to identify and reduce disparities in sentencing and bond decisions. I will also promote proven case management practices that reduce delays and improve access to justice including robust pretrial processes, early case screening, firm deadlines, and technology enhancements. My goal is to create a more accessible, efficient judiciary that meets the needs of Ohioans while upholding the highest standards of justice.

25. Please identify the greatest issue(s) the judiciary, or the court on which you wish to serve, faces today.

Restoring Public Trust

The greatest challenge facing Ohio's judiciary is restoring public confidence in an independent court system. Courts must be guided by the Constitution, the law, and the facts, not politics.

Protecting Judicial Independence

In April 2026, the Ohio Supreme Court, by a 5 to 1 vote, permitted judges to publicly endorse judicial and partisan political candidates. Justice Patrick Fischer warned in dissent that this decision "could have an immobilizing effect on the judicial system in Ohio." *See Disciplinary Counsel v. Rudduck*, 2026-Ohio-1126 (Fischer J. dissenting).

Although judicial endorsements are now permissible, I agree that judges should avoid partisan political endorsements. Courtrooms should remain places of impartial justice where every person can trust that they will receive a fair hearing.

Independence in Action

My commitment to judicial independence extends beyond the courtroom. I have accepted zero dollars from corporate interests, including energy companies. It is essential that the public trusts that judges will be accountable only to the Constitution and the law, and free from outside influence. Our job is to apply the law and constitutions without regard to politics or popularity.

Ensure Stability in the Law

During my time as a judge, the Ohio Supreme Court has reversed its own precedent five times. See *State ex rel. Martens v. Findlay Municipal Court*, 2024-Ohio-0122, reversing *State ex rel. Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers v. Sheward*, 1999-Ohio-123; *State v. Gonzalez II*, 2017-Ohio-777, reversing *State v. Gonzalez I*, 2016-Ohio-8319; *State v. Aalim II*, 2017-Ohio-2956, reversing *State v. Aalim I,* 2016-Ohio-8278; *State v. Gwynne II*, 2023-Ohio-3851, reversing *State v. Gwynne I*, 2022-Ohio-4607; *State v. King*, 2026-Ohio-2656, reversing *State ex rel. Yates v. Montgomery Cty. Court of Appeals*, 32 Ohio St.3d 30 (1987).

As a justice on the Ohio Supreme Court, I will carefully consider when precedent should be revisited, ensuring that any changes to settled law remain rare, principled, and thoroughly explained. Stability in the law advances fairness, predictability, and public confidence in our legal system.

26. Please explain how your background demonstrates the level of community engagement and understanding appropriate to the judicial office you are seeking.

I am Ready to Serve and Address the Issues We Are Facing

Thirty-eight years ago, I chose to make Ohio my home because I wanted to live in a safe, secure, and prosperous state. Before entering the legal field, I worked for a large Ohio corporation, Procter & Gamble, as a Technology Manager, solving complex technology issues. As an attorney, I advocated for individuals and families from all walks of life and represented new and established businesses. I also collaborated with law enforcement agencies to develop policies that encouraged victims to report crimes and participate in court proceedings, efforts that help protect entire communities.

These experiences give me genuine understanding of how the law touches everyone. Since joining the Ohio Court of Appeals in 2016, I have remained actively engaged in the community. I created and grew the Educating Tomorrow's Leaders program, which connects students with judges and the legal system. This initiative has reached thousands of young people across Ohio, inspiring them to pursue education, overcome challenges, and consider careers in law and justice.

My varied background, as an IT professional, a litigator, a community partner with law enforcement agencies, and now an appellate judge that has served at our Ohio Supreme Court, equips me to bring balanced, practical, real-world perspective to the Ohio Supreme Court. I am committed to decisions that uphold the Constitution, respect the rule of law, and fairly and impartially serve all Ohioans.

27. Please state any other information you regard as relevant to your candidacy.

My Proven Record of Steadfast Judicial Independence

I still consider myself a political outsider. I believe trust must be earned through actions and integrity rather than by repeating political slogans.

I approach being a judge with a deep commitment to Ohio's core values: integrity, hard work, fairness, and respect for constitutional rights. Always placing the rule of law above partisanship or special interests.

I have accepted zero dollars from corporate interests, including energy companies, because judicial independence must never be compromised.

My Commitment to You

At our Ohio Supreme Court, I will continue to decide every case based only on the United States Constitution, the Ohio Constitution, the law, and the facts.

Ohio has been my home for nearly forty years. It is where my children were raised and call home. I deeply value the friendships and strong sense of community I built over the years.

Growing up in challenging circumstances, simply graduating from high school represented a meaningful accomplishment. As a child, I never imagined the opportunity to become a Supreme Court Justice. I am proof that Ohio is a special place where big dreams can still come true for those willing to work hard and persevere.

Excessive political division and partisan agendas harm our state and its people. As a judge, my focus has always been, and will continue to be, deciding every case impartially, based solely on the law and the facts. I am seeking a seat on the Ohio Supreme Court because I firmly believe that an independent judiciary is essential to restoring public confidence, promoting stability and fairness, and creating the conditions in which hardworking Ohio families and communities can thrive and succeed.

It will be a profound honor to serve you at our Ohio Supreme Court.

Common Sense Over Politics. Accountability with Compassion. Fidelity to the Rule of Law.

FOR TRIAL COURT CANDIDATES

28. Would you conduct telephonic or video court appearance (e.g. pre-trials, case management conferences, etc.) for criminal and civil matters?

29. Both a criminal trial and civil trial are scheduled on the same date. All parties are ready to proceed. What factors will you consider when determining which matter will go forward and why?

30. How do you or will you manage your docket to ensure dispositive motions are heard in a timely manner so parties do not incur the time and expense of preparing for a trial that ultimately may not proceed? Would you be amenable to an automatic continuance of a trial date when a dispositive motion has not been ruled upon by a certain number of days in advance of trial?

31. Is there any additional information not previously addressed in the questionnaire that you would like to include?

JURAT

Marilyn Zayas, being first duly sworn, deposes and says that the information in the above questionnaire is true.

Signature of Candidate

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence this 14th day of September 2026.

Notary Public

My commission has no expiration

NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF OHIO

JAMES F. KELLER, ESQ.
Attorney at Law
Notary Public, State of Ohio
My Commission Has No Expiration
Date. Section 147.03 O.R.C.