

Seventh Bar District Association
Questionnaire for Judicial Candidates in Local Contested Races

1. What is your full name?

Timothy Michael Churchwell

2. Does your campaign have a website or Facebook page? If so, please list it.

Re-elect Judge Timothy Churchwell (Facebook)

3. List the colleges and law schools you have attended, including your dates of attendance and degrees awarded.

Hamline University School of Law | St. Paul MN
Juris Doctor, cum laude | 1986 - 1989

Northern Illinois University | DeKalb IL
Bachelor of Arts | 1981 - 1985

4. List where you have been employed since graduation from law school, including dates employed, your position and the nature of your employment responsibilities.

State of Minnesota - District Court Judge | Chambers Alexandria MN
Seventh Judicial District | 2017 - present

Preside over district court cases including civil, criminal, juvenile welfare and delinquency, family, probate, guardianship/conservatorship, commitment, and conciliation court. Proceedings include jury and court trials, motions, evidentiary hearings, dispositional matters, and preliminary and procedural hearings. Research and prepare corresponding orders and memoranda. Current caseload exceeds 1,000 cases and filings per year. Handle related administrative matters with the assistance of court administration.

Peters & Churchwell, P.A. | Long Prairie MN
Shareholder | 1994 - 2017

Maintained a private practice with an emphasis on municipal law, litigation, and business law. Served as City Attorney for Long Prairie, Swanville, Grey Eagle, Eagle Bend, Bertha, and Upsala. Represented individuals in guardianship and

conservatorship, commitment, and child welfare (CHIPS) proceedings. Served business entities and individuals in the areas of organization, acquisitions and sales, regulatory compliance, shareholder disputes, and business litigation. General experience included real estate transactions, probate, administrative proceedings and appeals, and civil litigation.

State of Minnesota Board of Public Defense

Assistant Public Defender | 1994 - 2017

In connection with private practice, served as a part-time public defender in the Seventh Judicial District primarily assigned cases in Todd, Douglas, and Morrison counties. Significant jury and court trial experience involving all levels of criminal and delinquency proceedings, pre-trial and post-trial motions, probation violations, and competency issues.

Brown & Sellnow | Long Prairie MN

Associate | 1991 - 1994

Developed a private practice mainly in the areas of business and family law. Discovery, motion, court and jury trial experience in both criminal and civil matters. Served as prosecutor for cities of Long Prairie and Browerville handling misdemeanor and gross misdemeanor cases.

Curott & Jesse | Milaca MN

Associate | 1990 - 1991

Practice focused on plaintiff personal injury cases serving as a support attorney handling discovery and motion issues.

State of Minnesota - Judicial Law Clerk | Winona MN

Third Judicial District | 1989 - 1990

Traditional law clerk position involving significant research and writing responsibilities including bench memoranda, jury instructions, court orders, and supporting opinions.

5. Have you ever been convicted of a crime or publicly disciplined by a lawyer or judicial standards board? If so, feel free to provide an explanation.

No

6. What is/was the general nature of your practice? Indicate any areas of practice in which you concentrate or concentrated. (Response limited to 150 words.)

My prior practice consisted primarily of criminal defense; court-based proceedings such as child welfare (CHIPS), guardianship/conservatorship, and commitments; municipal law; and business development. Throughout my practice, I represented hundreds of individuals and entities in district court proceedings within the Seventh Judicial District. Additionally, I handled cases before the Minnesota Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court Appeals Panel (SCAP).

Outside of the courtroom, I focused on serving as City Attorney for a number of small communities in Todd and Morrison counties. Primary responsibilities involved interacting with City Administrators, Mayors, and City Council members; preparing proposed ordinances; and coordinating legal work for large projects such as new sewer and water systems.

Lastly, I represented local business owners and entities handling business transactions, regulatory issues, business organization, and related transitional and estate planning matters.

7. What percentage of your practice is/was litigation?

Approximately 70 - 75%.

8. Why do you want to be a district court judge? (Response limited to 150 words.)

Minnesota has long embraced judges who are fair, impartial, and non-partisan. Over the years, I have come to appreciate the importance to our judicial stakeholders that we continue to commit to these values. I want to remain a District Court Judge because I have found it incredibly self-fulfilling to serve our community by honoring this commitment.

On a professional level, I am equally fulfilled by the challenges of serving as a District Court Judge. Each day, I am presented with new issues and complicated cases. I am tasked with arriving at a fair decision that properly addresses the facts and law. The process demands I apply my experience and knowledge in a manner that is thorough, impartial, and respectful. Successfully meeting this challenge serves as its own reward and affirms my professional commitment to this position.

9. What qualities do you believe are most important in a district court judge? Explain how you have demonstrated that you possess those qualities. (Response limited to 250 words.)

While there are many excellent traits found in judges, several are integral to the best judges. First, a judge must openly value each individual and their concerns in the

courtroom. I demonstrate this aspect through a patient attitude and respectful demeanor. As a judge, I make decisions that may significantly affect an individual or family. If I make a decision without showing consideration for those individuals or interests, I have likely eroded their confidence in me and our legal system.

Second, a judge must be impartial. To guard against partiality, real or perceived, I begin with two practices: (1) focus the proceeding on the legal issue as opposed to a personal perspective, and (2) keep the courtroom a level playing field. Then, I apply the law as written and support it with well researched opinions. Impartiality is integral to the atmosphere within the courtroom as well as the legal decision. By striving to demonstrate both aspects, I provide a fair opportunity to all parties involved.

In the end, the judges I admire most are those who understand respect is earned, not given simply because we wear a black robe. It is not my duty to make the law nor change the law; I am bound by oath to follow the law. When I follow the law in a fair and impartial manner, and treat individuals with respect and understanding, then I have taken the essential steps to carry out my role with integrity.

*10. Why do you believe you are the best candidate for this district court judge seat?
(Response limited to 250 words.)*

I am a known and proven District Court Judge with over seven years of experience on the bench. I have worked hard to build a reputation as an approachable, understanding, and patient Judge, who cares about the people he works with and who appear in front of him. I have never taken my position for granted and strive to embody the qualities of a good judge.

This year marks my 35th year as an attorney and judge who has handled thousands of cases throughout the Seventh Judicial District in virtually every area of the law. My experience and knowledge provide a solid foundation for handling the unrelenting demands of being an efficient and trusted District Court Judge. I have worked selflessly to maintain my caseload, including successfully reducing the pandemic case backlog.

I am committed to being a fair and impartial judge who values each individual that walks into my courtroom. I am accountable to all. I have successfully earned the respect of my peers throughout the legal community in central Minnesota, but fully acknowledge it is a process which requires ongoing commitment and personal accountability. The Minnesota Judicial Branch has maintained its integrity by adhering to a commitment of fairness and impartiality. This is the bench I value, and the Seventh Judicial District is the community I want to serve as a District Court Judge.