

Name: Shawn Ismail

Court: County Court at Law #6

1 What current or past judge do you most want to inspire your approach to judicial excellence, and why?

There are many great Judges both past and present that inspire me. Of the past Judges, Royal Furgeson, Western District was a Judge that inspired me. I feel that in his Court, a grievance could be redressed. He was the type of Judge that listened and that I feel is a most important quality for a Judge.

2 What has been the greatest accomplishment in your legal career? In your personal life?

I am a forward looking person. I believe that my best is yet to come. I do not believe that I am anywhere near my peak yet. As far as milestones go though, I was President of the Plano Bar Association in 5 years ago. I was the youngest President they have ever had.

Personally my life has been blessings more than me accomplishing anything. I have a wonderful family, loving and supportive wife Yolanda, a daughter Isabel and expecting another child soon.

3 What, if anything, would you change to improve the procedures and efficiency of the court you are seeking?

There are several issues I think would improve efficiency and procedures. We need to update and upgrade the local civil rules. That way valuable Court time is not used for pretrial disputes. "Empty Courtrooms move cases." I would separate the jail docket from the bond docket. I would also institute an afternoon docket for the bond clients as well as to provide additional scheduling options. I also think that video plea is a matter of "when" not "if". I would explore conducting a jail docket at the jail to facilitate the disposition process.

4 Do you feel that ALL citizens have equal and adequate access to justice in our county? How would you improve that access?

ATJ is always an issue of contention. I do think that within the criminal context, there is a constitutional requirement for access to counsel which is often equivocated to access to justice. The quality of indigent Counsel is something that should be monitored regularly.

In the civil context, Legal Aid is woefully under funded. At the same time, there is no other representative agency to help the citizenry have their grievances redressed. ATJ is a more glaring problem in the civil context than it appears on the surface.

5 Collin County tracks indigent defense dollars ordered by each judge. What effect would that reporting have on your decisions to order that the county pay for a defendant's defense?

None. As a Judge my role is to see that the law is followed. The right to counsel governs this analysis.

6 What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice in Collin County?

Docketing constraints, time constraints and the resulting delays as the Courts are very busy leads to fatigue on the part of the litigants in the civil and criminal context.

7 Incarceration is the most expensive criminal sanction available. How would that fact affect your sentencing decisions?

Most misdemeanors cases are probation cases. In the misdemeanor context, it is possible that with proper supervision and safeguards, many people can be put on a track to improve their lives. Obviously, I would be open to any types of programs that can allow an offender rehabilitation without endangering the public.

8 Without commenting on a specific case or type of cases, should Collin County explore more or different types of alternative sentencing? What do you think works? What would you like to try?

The National and State trend would indicate that alternative sentencing will be the norm. I think intense drug and dwi programs in the misdemeanor criminal context would be the types of cases that would be most suitable for alternative sentencing and also the type I would institute if workable with probation and the District Attorney.

9 Recently a Dallas judge made the news when he replaced a white juror with a minority one in a capital trial where the jury was all white and the defendant was not. Do you believe it is important for a minority defendant to have a jury that contains minority members?

Batson v Kentucky is related to this question. I do not believe that the State or Defense can strike potential jurors because of race. I think the Dallas Judge struck a Juror because of race. I do not think that affirmative action in Jury Selection is appropriate.

10 When a judge's sense of justice appears to be at variance to the strict application of the law, what approach should an ethical judge take to resolve the conflict?

Occasionally the law is insufficient to address to certain issues. As a Judge, I would apply the law. My sense of justice does not set aside the rule of law.

11 Do you believe that our system of partisan election of trial judges should be continued? How can it be improved?

I do. Judicial training and a more open and transparent review process of the Judge's performance is needed to inform the electorate about how a particular Judge is doing.

12 Tell the voters one thing about yourself that isn't on any website, nor discussed at any forum.

I think I am a good cook. I have been unable to substantiate that opinion with any independent testimony.