

Name: Judge Jerry Lewis  
Court: Collin County Court at Law #2

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

Scalia and Kennedy. I respect all judges who have the courage to protect our rule of law, and, therefore, us, even when the result is not popular.

2. What has been the greatest accomplishment in your legal career?

During my time as an Army lawyer, helping soldiers and their families pick up the pieces as they returned from Viet Nam. 2<sup>nd</sup> Receiving letters from criminal defendants (usually in alcohol or drug-related cases) thanking me for helping them change their lives.

In your personal life? Raising my son, David.

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

Case filings have been increasing each year; but the time available and staffing will remain the same. We must do more with less. Telephone conferences will allow some hearings without requiring attorney travel. Electronic transmittal of action documents instead of paper mail will help speed communication between the judge and attorneys.

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

Yes.

How would you improve that access?

We need to identify and get mentally-ill defendants into treatment faster and out of the criminal justice system.

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?

Honestly, none. I am committed to being the best steward of taxpayer dollars set aside for this; but I have never had an official complain how much I order paid or not paid. My goal is to examine the defendant if they are found guilty to see if the defendant can afford to pay back as court costs what the county paid an attorney.

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

To make sure we are able to try all the cases timely with increasing population and few, if any, new courts.

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

Most sentences to jail are recommended by an Assistant District Attorney and accepted by the defendant and defense attorney. In cases left up to the judge, jail should be used when punishment is the greatest need, such as when other treatment and counseling services have failed in prior cases. Even then, each case should be treated individually and sometimes a combination works better.

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?

Personal attention to persons charged with alcohol or drug abuse before the case comes up for trial.

What would you like to try? Referral of substance abuse cases to drug courts in return for accepting other cases to keep the workload fair.

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?

It is important that the juror pool contains a fair representation of all our population and that the attorneys in each case have full opportunity to question each prospective juror. Through this open exposure and disclosure, justice can be accomplished. It is what the prospective juror says that should cause the attorney to keep or strike the person, not their skin or ethnic beliefs.

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? First, check and re-check the facts.

The judge must be absolutely sure the facts proven require the strict application. Then, have the courage to award the verdict to the side who the law says must win. A judge must always follow the law. A Judge must always follow the law.

11. Do you believe that our system of partisan election of trial judges should be continued?

It is the way our people have chosen to select judges in Texas. The people want a close contact during elections with judges who provide protection from the other two branches of government.

**How can it be improved?** Elections like this one will better-educate the people about the duties of the particular courts.

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

I am an Eagle Scout.