

JUSTICE SHARON G. LEE

Recommendation: RETAIN

Commission Vote: 9 FOR RETENTION • 0 FOR REPLACEMENT

Legal Education and Experience

Justice Sharon G. Lee received a law degree from the University of Tennessee College of Law in 1978. She engaged in the private practice of law in Madisonville from 1978 until 2004 during which time she served as County Attorney for Monroe County, as City Judge for Madisonville, and City Attorney for Madisonville and Vonnore. She was appointed to the Court of Appeals on June 2, 2004, elected in August 2004, and reelected in 2006. She was appointed to the Tennessee Supreme Court in October 2008, and was elected in August, 2010.

Service to the Profession

Justice Lee is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association, Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women, East Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women, Knoxville Bar Association, Tennessee Bar Foundation, Knoxville Bar Foundation and the American Bar Foundation. She co-authored "Opening and Closing Arguments," an article on the Judicial Selection Process for the Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women newsletter, and a book review of the history of the Tennessee Supreme Court for the Knoxville Bar Association newsletter. She frequently lectures on legal topics to both legal and non-legal audiences.

Survey Results and Interview

Justice Lee's survey ratings from appellate judges, trial judges, and attorneys reflect an overall excellent performance. Her ratings in the areas of oral argument, administrative performance and general performance were consistently noteworthy from these groups. Appellate and trial judges consistently rated her written opinions as excellent, and attorneys gave her consistently high marks for her professional demeanor and attention to ethical obligations. The Commission found that Justice Lee is very knowledgeable and experienced in the law, as demonstrated by her experiences both as a legal practitioner and as a member of the Court of Appeals. Justice Lee noted that there is an adjustment between serving on the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court be-

cause of the additional administrative duties that are required of Justices of the Supreme Court. She stated that while the Supreme Court writes fewer opinions than the Court of Appeals, the review of applications for permission to appeal, addition of administration duties and the increase in the number of requests to speak at public functions ensures significant workload. Justice Lee's heavy schedule speaks highly of her work ethic and her work product demonstrates her commitment to timely, high-quality written opinions.

Comments and Recommendation

The Commission was impressed with Justice Lee's professed commitments to judicial restraint and adherence to original intent in construing legislative and constitutional provisions. Justice Lee expressed the view that the court's function of developing 'new law' was narrowly confined to the evolution of the common law, and not a license to substitute the Court's view of social policy in place of the view expressed through legislation. Moreover, Justice Lee professed a jurisprudential philosophy of deference to the co-equal branches of state government when those branches exercise their legislative and executive functions.

The Commission unanimously recommends Justice Sharon G. Lee be retained on the Tennessee Supreme Court.

Justice Lee's Response

I am grateful for the outstanding evaluation and unanimous recommendation for retention. It is an honor and privilege to serve the citizens of Tennessee as a Supreme Court Justice. During my six years on the Supreme Court, I have, at all times, exercised judicial restraint and have impartially and fairly interpreted and applied the laws of this state. I hold true to the conservative family values I learned growing up in a small town as the daughter of a War World II veteran and prisoner of war. During my next term of office, I will continue to provide leadership and service to all Tennesseans based on the values that make Tennessee strong. The people of Tennessee deserve nothing less.

SUPREME COURT