



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Full Name: Matthew Isaac Destry

2. Current County of residence: Broward

3. Date and place of birth.

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

judgedestry.com

FB Government Official Page: Matthew Isaac Destry

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

University of Tampa, B.S. Mathematics, 1981-1985

Stetson University College of Law, J.D., 1985-1988

6. Have you ever served in the military?

Yes, USAF 1977-1981

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

State Attorney - 6th Judicial Circuit 1988-1996

Assistant State Attorney: prosecuted cases in County and Circuit Court ranging from Misdemeanors to Murder 1

Matthew I. Destry, PA - Owner/Managing Partner 1997-2004

Litigated civil and criminal cases in both State and Federal Courts, handled appeals and administrative hearings as well

Florida Attorney General 2004-2007

Assistant Statewide Prosecutor: prosecuted white collar crime, Medicaid Fraud and RICO cases

Circuit Court Judge - 17th Judicial Circuit 2007-present

8. Have you ever been arrested? Explain.

No

9. Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Explain.

No

10. What is the general nature of your practice? Indicate areas of practice in which you concentrate or concentrated?

I am currently assigned to the Criminal Bench

11. If you are currently a judge, what type of cases do you typically preside over in your court?

I have a regular criminal division with cases ranging from 3\* Felonies to Capital Crimes

12. If you are currently a judge, have any of your decisions ever been appealed and overturned? How many times in the last two (2) years? When and what case?

Many of my decisions have been appealed. Almost every trial that results in a guilty verdict is appealed as a matter of right. Rulings on motions are appealed as well. Information on the number of appeals and the specific cases would have to be obtained from the Fourth DCA

13. What percentage of your litigation or trial experience was related to:

Civil? 10%

Criminal? 90%

**14. How many cases have you tried to verdict?**

Before taking the Bench, I tried over 200 cases to juries to verdict. Since taking the Bench, I have presided over more than 100 jury trials that have gone to verdict.

**15. Describe three of the most significant litigated matters, which you personally handled and give the citations thereto, if the cases were reported.**

State v. Aileen Wournos

State v. Gerard Lopes

State v. Stephanie Kraft

**16. Why do you want to be a judge (circuit or county)?**

I believe in public service.

**17. What qualities do you believe are most important in a judge? Explain how you have demonstrated that you possess those qualities.**

A judge should be thoughtful, compassionate and impartial while upholding the law and the Constitution. Those who have appeared before me are best able to report whether I have demonstrated these qualities.

**18. Why do you believe that you are the best candidate for the seat you are running for?**

Apart from my background and experience prior to taking the Bench, I have time in - almost 9 years now as your Circuit Court Judge. The experience has taught me how to be a better judge. The fact that I have been both a civil servant and in private practice before taking the Bench, gives me insight and perspective that has helped me run a more efficient and user-friendly docket.

**19. Describe your civic activities and community involvement for the past five (5) years, listing what years you participated in each activity or were involved.**

**20. Please list noteworthy professional or personal accomplishments.**

I am an AV Rated Preeminent Lawyer in the Martindale-Hubbell listings

I am a Florida Bar Board Certified Criminal Trial Lawyer  
(since 1996)

I speak French fluently, some Spanish and Russian

**21.** Please list the federal and state courts where you are admitted to practice.

All Florida State Courts

U.S. District Court for the Northern, Middle and Southern  
Districts of Florida

U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit

U.S. Supreme Court

**22.** How many times did you take the Florida Bar Exam?

Once

**23.** Have you ever failed Bar exams in any state? If so, when and where?

No

**24.** Have you ever been investigated by a State Bar grievance committee or by the State  
Commission on Judicial Conduct?

**25.** Have you ever been disciplined or reprimanded for your conduct as a lawyer or judge?  
If the answer is yes, please explain?

No

**26.** Have you or your law firm ever been sued by a client? If so, please explain.

Yes. A client sued my firm for return of fees after we had  
done substantial work on the case and then took a  
voluntary dismissal prior to trial.

**27.** Please discuss your view/opinion of proper judicial temperament.

A judge should treat all litigants - even the most vexing  
and disrespectful - with courtesy and respect. I believe  
that when a judge shows disrespect or is less than  
courteous, it denigrates the position and does our justice  
system a disservice.

- 28.** If you are seeking election or re-election to a criminal court, discuss your view of plea bargains and when they should and should not be accepted.

I am currently assigned to a criminal division. The majority of cases are resolved by plea bargains and the courts have held that they are essential to the process. The decision to accept a plea offer rests solely with a defendant. As the presiding Judge, my responsibility is to ensure that an agreement is legal and enforceable, ie. that the terms are realistic.

- 29.** Tell us about any plans you have to improve the administration of the court or make it more efficient.

We are always looking to improve the process to make the courts more accessible and efficient both in terms of resources and time. For example, I changed the way I run my docket by taking the Bench at 9:30AM, an hour after we open the courtroom for business. This gives lawyers and their clients time to discuss their cases and negotiate with the State before having the case called and has greatly reduced the lag time on a crowded docket. To ensure that defendants who are in custody have the same opportunity to negotiate, they are brought up at 8:30AM. The hour also gives me time to address paperwork in chambers. I have also arranged our docket to allow us to reach more cases for trial quickly and accommodate most cases with out-of-state witnesses without the need to "special set" them. We standardized our plea forms, structuring them so that all provisions are contained on a single sheet of paper and I had our certified court interpreters translate them into Spanish and Creole. I continue to look for new and innovative ways to improve. We are in the public service business and I take that seriously.

- 30.** Have you ever taught any law school courses or any continuing legal education courses? If so, describe the extent and nature of those teaching experiences.

I routinely judge Mock Trial competitions for the University of Miami.

**31.** List any significant pro bono work completed since graduating from law school.

As an ASA, I put together the first Teen Court Program in Pasco County. When I was in private practice, I often represented people at reduced rates or for no fee. I guest lecture in high schools and I judge Mock Trial and Moot Court competitions.

**32.** List any leadership positions, or participation in any committees in voluntary bar associations and/or professional societies, which you believe to be of particular significance (e.g. judicial selection committees, disciplinary committees, grievance committees, etc.).

**33.** List all organizations and associations, or professional societies, other than bar associations, of which you are or have been a member, including civic, charitable, religious, educational, social, and fraternal organizations.

FPAA (Florida Prosecuting Attorneys Association); PBA (Police Benevolent Association - Associate Member); FACDL (Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers); Best Buddies; FISP (Florida Initiative for Suicide Prevention)

**34.** What is your judicial philosophy?

I am a public servant whose primary duties are to uphold the Constitution and the law and to ensure that justice is administered in a timely fashion.

**35.** Describe what contributions you have made to the Hispanic community in the past five (5) years.

As your Judge, I have made every effort to ensure equal access to our courts for all. In Broward County, this means finding ways to communicate with people whose language and culture are different, many of whom are Hispanic. My JA speaks fluent Spanish and we make every effort to accommodate all who comes through our division.

**36.** Are you a Member of the Broward County Hispanic Bar Association?

No

**37.** As a prospective judge, or as a current Judge, what do you consider your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

**38.** Why are you the best candidate for the position you are seeking?

I would ask that you consider my education, experience and accomplishments and, if re-elected, please know that I will carry out my duties with honor and integrity.

ON BEHALF OF THE BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION, THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION!