



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION

### JUDICIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Full Name:** Lea Krauss
2. **Current County of residence.** Broward
3. **Date and place of birth.** 5/3/75 New York
4. **Does your campaign have a website or Facebook page? If so, please list it.**  
[www.KraussForJudge.com](http://www.KraussForJudge.com) and [www.facebook.com/KraussForJudge/](http://www.facebook.com/KraussForJudge/)
5. **List the colleges and law schools you have attended, including your dates of attendance and degrees awarded.**

I attended the University of Michigan from 1993-1997, where I obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in psychology. I attended the University of Miami Law School from 1997-1999, graduating early in 2 ½ years with my Juris Doctorate degree. I studied abroad in law school during the summer semester of 1998 at the London University School of Law.

6. **Have you ever served in the military?** No
7. **List where you have been employed since graduation from law school, including dates employed, your position and the nature of your employment responsibilities.** Broward County State Attorney's Office from April 2000 to April 2003 - Prosecuted misdemeanors and felonies, handled heavy caseloads and gained tremendous jury trial experience. Private civil practice from April 2003 to January 2004 – Associate handling a range of cases from medical malpractice to commercial litigation. Founded my own law firm in February 2004, where I have worked until the present.
8. **Have you ever been arrested? Explain.** No
9. **Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Explain.** No



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



- 10. What is the general nature of your practice? Indicate areas of practice in which you concentrate or concentrated?** I predominantly handle criminal matters from simple traffic tickets to complex felony cases punishable by life in prison. In addition to criminal law, over the past 16 years I have handled a wide range of civil cases including medical malpractice, personal injury, commercial litigation, real estate, family law, probate, administrative hearings and foreclosures. I am a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator. Judges on the family law bench have appointed me to serve as a Guardian Ad Litem, to advocate on behalf of children.
- 11. If you are currently a judge, what type of cases do you typically preside over in your court?** NA
- 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?** NA
- 13. What percentage of your litigation or trial experience was related to:**
- Civil?** 15%
  - Criminal?** 85%
- 14. How many cases have you tried to verdict?** Over 80
- 15. Describe three of the most significant litigated matters, which you personally handled and give the citations thereto, if the cases were reported.**
- As an Assistant State Attorney, I prosecuted a well-known drug dealer for dealing drugs to children at a school in our community. The jury convicted the Defendant and he was sentenced to prison.
  - I defended an African American man who was falsely accused of committing a felony punishable by life in prison. My investigation uncovered gross negligence by the arresting officer and all charges were dropped, which led to a civil rights law suit against the officer.
  - I defended the business partner of the largest "pill mill" boss in Florida. I represented the business partner in seven different civil and criminal cases in both State and Federal Court. I was able to prove that all of the allegations were false. I was successful in getting all criminal charges dropped and all civil suits dismissed.
- 16. Why do you want to be a judge (circuit or county)?**
- Nearly every day for the past 16 years I have gone to court seeking justice. As a judge, I will ensure justice is achieved and that all people are treated fairly. I will be an efficient judge, which begins with starting court promptly and being prepared for the docket of cases every day to timely resolve disputes. I will apply the laws evenly so parties can expect consistency in how I will handle matters. Our legal system is adversarial in nature, so essentially, with the exception of adoptions, there is a winning and losing party in every case. However, a judge who listens with compassion and treats everyone with respect can make a difficult situation a little better. I



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



will be that kind of judge. Becoming a judge extends my years of service to impact a larger community — Broward County.

**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 even-tempered, composed, respectful, impartial, and decisive. Circuit court is the highest trial court, and therefore it is imperative to have a depth of jury trial experience to learn and master the nuances of the evidence code. Judges preside over a range of difficult cases and they must manage many different personalities which requires an even-temperament and a strong commitment to the administration of justice. My experiences as an attorney and as a leader with many organizations have best prepared me to be a circuit court judge. As a prosecutor for three years, my office was literally in the courthouse handling extraordinary caseloads which prepares me for the demanding workload of a Broward County Circuit Court Judge. Additionally, spending nearly every day in court for the past 16 years affords me a unique understanding of daily courtroom administration. Running my own successful law firm has provided invaluable experience with supervising staff and time management. As a leader in several organizations including president of my condominium and president of a legal association, I learned I have the critical skillset of managing different and sometimes difficult personalities. Judges are routinely tasked with keeping order in their courtrooms and moving their dockets, which can only be done by a strong leader. I believe all that I have done both personally and professionally has prepared me to be a circuit court judge.

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

I am the most qualified candidate. The two things that set me apart in my race are the depth of my experience and my even-temperament. I have had over 80 trials and over 1000 evidentiary hearings. I am the only one in my race that has a depth of experience with a wide range of cases for plaintiffs and defendants in both criminal and civil law. I am the only former prosecutor in my race and I worked my way up to be a lead prosecutor in the felony trial unit. I handled heavy caseloads in excess of 300 at a time, which uniquely prepares me to meet the demanding workloads of a Broward County Circuit Court Judge. My temperament sets me apart, as evidenced by the overwhelming support I have received from the community with over 200 endorsements and over 700 contributors to my campaign. I am the only candidate in my race that has been endorsed by the PBA (Police Benevolent Association), the Broward County Council of Professional Firefighters, and the IAFF (International Association of Firefighters) Local 4321. I am especially proud of the PBA and IAFF endorsements because as a criminal defense attorney for over 13 years, it is my duty to question the actions of first responders including police and firefighters on nearly every single case. It is truly an honor that my adversaries who have seen my courtroom demeanor believe that I am the most qualified candidate in my race. I am the only candidate in my race to be endorsed by the Hispanic Vote and the Puerto Rican Bar Association as well. I have also received endorsements from Democracy for America, the National Organization for Women, the Broward Allied Medical PAC, the Victory Institute, elected officials, community leaders and voters. In the next 2-4 years, there will be nearly one dozen Broward County Circuit Court Judges who will be forced to retire because of mandatory age



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



limits at 70 years-old. These judges preside in 4 separate circuit court divisions – criminal, civil, probate and family. I am the only candidate in my race that has a depth of experience, including jury trials, needed to preside over each of these divisions. The Chief Judge will assign all the newly elected judges to a particular circuit court division -- the elected judge does not get to choose. Therefore, it is imperative to elect a candidate who can competently handle cases whether in criminal or civil divisions. I am the most qualified in my race to step into each and every circuit court division.

**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.**

- Mentor a hearing impaired orphan who lived at a group home through a “Forever Friend” program, similar to a “Big Sister/Little Sister” program- 2012 to present
- Mentor law students at Nova Southeastern University, Miami Law School and St. Thomas University - 2010 to present
- Florida Bar – Member since 2000
- Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers – Member since 2010
- Florida Association of Women Lawyers – Member since 2004
- Broward County Bar Association – Member since 2004
- Broward County Hispanic Bar Association – Member since 2014
- Broward Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers – Member since 2004
- Broward County Matrimonial Lawyers Association – Member since 2010
- Broward County Women Lawyers Association – Member since 2004
- Lambda Legal Liberty Circle - Member 2012-2014
- Our Fund “First 100 Funders” - Member 2012-2015
- Volunteer with Mission United from 2015 to present
- Washington Club member of AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) – 2015 to present
- Associate member of the 10-13 Club for retired New York Police Department Officers – 2016
- Tower Forum – Member since 2016
- Countless food drives throughout Broward and Palm Beach County from 2004 to present

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

- Recognized for my courtroom skills by the chief of the trial unit at the Broward State Attorney’s Office and was the only prosecutor selected for specialized training at the Institute for Police Technology and Management
- Proclamation by Mayor Gary Resnick, declaring April, 29th “Lea Paige Krauss Day” for my service and dedication to the community
- Attended intimate White House Reception for Pride Month to meet the President of the United States and the First Lady where I was recognized for my leadership and being a pioneer in the community



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



- Award for "Outstanding and tireless service as Incorporator and President of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Network from 2011-2015"

**21. Please list the federal and state courts where you are admitted to practice.** All Florida state courts and United States District Court, Southern District of Florida

**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?** No

**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.** No

**27. Please discuss your view/opinion of proper judicial temperament.** A judge should be even-tempered, composed, respectful, impartial, and decisive. Judges preside over a range of difficult cases and they must manage many different personalities which requires an even-temperament and a strong commitment to the administration of justice.

**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.** As someone who has practiced predominantly criminal law for 16 years as both a prosecutor and a defense attorney, I appreciate the important role of plea bargains in the criminal justice system. A judge should not impede plea bargains in anyway. A judge should accept lawful plea offers and allow the parties to resolve cases as they see fit.

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

A courtroom is most efficient when a judge is prepared by having read through all submissions before a hearing, arrives on time, and effectively manages the parties in order to move cases. Furthermore, productivity can be increased when parties are permitted to take advantage of technology including the submission of documents electronically and permitting parties to appear for hearings telephonically or through video-conferencing. I will not require parties to submit "hard copies" of documents, but instead all submissions can be delivered electronically. I will encourage parties to communicate with my office using electronic mail as well.



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



- 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 presented a seminar on the “Myths of DUI” law
- 31. List any significant pro bono work completed since graduating from law school.**
- Domestic violence injunctions– Representing petitioners and respondents
  - Family Law cases
  - Foreclosures
  - Landlord/Tenant
  - Contract Disputes
  - Liaison for victims of crimes with the State Attorney’s Office
  - Represented juveniles and first offenders on criminal cases
  - Traffic violations
- 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.).**
- Gay & Lesbian Lawyers Network – Founding incorporator in 2011 and served as president for 5 years
  - B’nai B’rith Justice Unit – Member from 2004 to present and currently a Board of Director
  - President of condominium association - Active on multiple committees from 2005 to 2011 and served on the board from 2009-2010
  - Board of Director at the Pride Center of Equality Park – involved since 2008, served on the board from 2011-2012
  - Steering committee for Jewish Federation’s Women’s Executive Circle – 2015 to present
  - Inaugural chair of “Women With Pride” from 2011-2012
- 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.** Please see answers to questions 19 and 32.
- 34. What is your judicial philosophy?** I will treat everyone fairly and with respect. I will decide all cases according to the law and strictly on the merits. I will apply the laws evenly and uniformly so my rulings are consistent.
- 35. Describe what contributions you have made to the Hispanic community in the past five (5) years.** For the past four years I have mentored a remarkable hearing impaired, Puerto Rican, orphan. Over the years I have gone from being her mentor to her “fairy god-mother”, a nickname she gave to me after earning her trust and love. She has become part of my family



## BROWARD COUNTY HISPANIC BAR ASSOCIATION



and I have always encouraged her to embrace her heritage. In addition, I have been an active member of the Broward County Hispanic Bar and a participant at meetings of The Hispanic Vote.

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

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

My greatest strengths are the depth of my experience and my even-temperament. My depth of courtroom experience includes over 50 jury trials, over 30 bench trials, and over 1000 hearings in both criminal and civil cases. My extensive courtroom practice has given me an intimate knowledge of the evidence code and rules of procedure. Managing my own successful law firm for 13 years has provided invaluable experience with supervising staff and time management.

Another one of my greatest strengths is that I am fastidious, which is also my greatest weakness. The upside is that I spend a lot of time making sure everything is “just right”. The downside is that I spend a lot of time making sure everything is “just right”.

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

My leadership skills, my depth of experience in the courtroom, and my belief in treating all people fairly, make me the most qualified candidate. I am running for this position because I would be an asset to the bench as an experienced and even-tempered litigator.

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