

Bio

Douglas Combs

Combs was born October 17, 1951 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He graduated from Shawnee High School in 1969. Combs attended St. Gregory's Junior College for one year on an athletic scholarship and transferred to the University of Oklahoma receiving his Bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1973. Combs received his Juris Doctorate degree from Oklahoma City University in 1976. While in law school Combs worked as a Deputy Court Clerk for the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Following admission to the Oklahoma Bar Association in 1976, Combs served as an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma under Attorney General Larry Derryberry. In 1977, he returned to his hometown, Shawnee and entered private practice as an associate with the firm of Henry, West and Sill.

Combs began his judicial career in January 1995 as a Special Judge for the Twenty-third Judicial District, serving both Pottawatomie and Lincoln Counties. While a special judge, Combs was responsible for the establishment of the first Drug Court in the Twenty-third Judicial District. Combs presided over the Drug Court docket while a special judge, and subsequently as district judge until his appointment to the Supreme Court. Combs was first elected without opposition to District Judge in November 2002 and again without opposition in 2006. He served eight years as District Judge for the Twenty-third Judicial District.

Combs was appointed by Governor Brad Henry to serve as a Supreme Court Justice for District 8 and began in that capacity January 1, 2010.

Justice Combs has been married to his wife, Janet for 38 years. The couple has two sons, both members of the Oklahoma Bar Association. Justice Combs is a member of Muscogee Creek Nation. Justice Combs and Janet are members of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Shawnee.

Responses

1) Why should voters retain you?

I was appointed to the Supreme Court January 1, 2011. At the time of my appointment I had served as a Deputy Court Clerk, an Assistant Attorney General, been in private practice for over 15 years, a Special Judge and a District Judge in Pottawatomie County. I believe experience is the best attribute for a Supreme Court Justice. I have been a trial Judge, handling all aspects of civil, criminal, probate, guardianship dockets, including drug court and community sentencing as well as all administrative functions in the operation of the courts. In the twenty-one months I have been on the Supreme Court, I have come to the office with my background as the compass in my quest to interpret the law. A Supreme Court Justice must have a diverse

background, the ability to listen to other members of the Court and the vision to understand the effects of the Courts decisions.

I have lived in Oklahoma my entire life, and still reside in my hometown, Shawnee. My roots are deep in this State and I believe I understand the values and principles of the people. When I first became a judge, I took an oath to support the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Oklahoma and to administer justice to the best of my knowledge and ability. If retained I will continue to abide by my oath and do this job to the best of my ability.

2) How can you ensure a fair judiciary process for all parties involved?

Members of the Supreme Court are appointed by a process where applicants are reviewed by the members of the constitutionally created Judicial Nominating Committee. This committee is comprised of members from both political parties appointed by members of the Executive branch, Legislative branch and elected by the members of the Oklahoma Bar Association. The purpose of this process is to attempt to find qualified candidates regardless of political background to serve in the third branch of government, the Judiciary. This exercise of the balance of power between the branches of government provides the infrastructure for an independent judiciary. An independent judiciary provides a fair judicial process to all parties involved. Not unlike a sporting event, where everyone wants a fair referee or umpire, we must have fair impartial judges, not owing favors to either side of a dispute. All a party can ask for is a level playing field. That is the role of the judiciary. There will always be “winners and losers” in any dispute but the objective of the judiciary is to allow each party to have the opportunity within the established procedural rules to present their case, have their issues heard and finality brought to their dispute. A fair process would demand an equal and balanced application of the procedural rules to the facts of the dispute. As a member of the judiciary the goal of fairness and equal application of the law will be an unbending requirement of the judicial process.