

# North Carolina Supreme Court

## CANDIDATES



**RICHARD  
DIETZ**

REPUBLICAN



**LUCY  
INMAN**

DEMOCRAT

## Nonpartisan Candidate Guide to the 2022 Dietz-Inman Supreme Court Race

The North Carolina Supreme Court [has seven members](#), with two seats up for election. This race is between Republican Judge Richard Dietz and Judge Lucy Inman, a Democrat. We've covered the race between Republican Trey Allen and incumbent Democrat Justice Sam Ervin in another guide. Justices serve eight-year terms.

The outcome of this election will determine what party controls the Court. [The Democratic justices have a narrow 4-3 majority](#). Both open seats are held by Democrats, so Republicans only need to win one race to gain control of the Court.

The North Carolina Supreme Court can have a [significant impact on state policy and individual rights](#). Just this year, the Court held that a legislature elected based on racially manipulated districts [cannot propose amendments to the North Carolina constitution](#), issued a decision eliminating [protection from legal liability for nurses](#) acting pursuant to a doctor's instruction, and created a [mandatory parole review](#) for prisoners sentenced as juveniles who have subsequently served 40 years in prison. The Court will also soon decide whether the [state's voter ID law is unconstitutional](#) and whether individuals [convicted of a felony can be prevented from voting](#).

To help you decide, we've assembled background about the candidates' education and previous work experience, along with rulings they've made as sitting judges, public statements, and publicized endorsements, to indicate how they might rule on key issues in the future.

For more information about the race, see [this article about the candidates' "core beliefs,"](#) and these [descriptions of the candidates](#).

### **RICHARD DIETZ** [judgedietz.com](http://judgedietz.com)

#### **Background**

Judge Richard Dietz currently serves as a judge on the [North Carolina Court of Appeals](#), a position he has held since [2014](#).

[Previously](#), Dietz was a partner at the law firm of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, working as an appellate litigator.

[Dietz holds](#) a degree in business from Shippensburg University, a law degree from Wake Forest University School of Law, and a master's degree in judicial studies from Duke University.

### **LUCY INMAN** [lucyinmanforjustice.com](http://lucyinmanforjustice.com)

#### **Background**

Judge Lucy Inman currently serves as a judge on the [North Carolina Court of Appeals](#), a position she has held since [2014](#).

[Previously](#), Inman served as a special North Carolina Superior Court judge, after working as a civil litigator in private practice.

[Inman holds](#) a degree in English from N.C. State University and a law degree from the University of North Carolina.

**Judicial Rulings**

- In a February 2022 land use appeal, Dietz wrote that in the face of zoning ordinances that were [“convoluted, conflicting, ambiguous,”](#) the issue must be resolved [“in favor of the free use of property.”](#)

**Statements**

- Dietz said, [“Because judges can wield significant power in our society, they must commit to upholding the law and rejecting the temptation to decide cases on the basis of their policy preferences...’We the People’ ratified our fundamental rights, and the limits on government, and the role of judges is to enforce and protect what the people enshrined in the Constitution.”](#)
- He said, [“the single most important job the Supreme Court can do is maintain the certainty and stability that we have in our jurisprudence,”](#) that the law should not “swing back and forth based on the composition of the Supreme Court.”
- Regarding the decision to make North Carolina judicial elections partisan, Dietz said, [“I don’t think the party labels have any impact on the work judges do on the court. I strongly believe the public supports the idea of nonpartisan judges, but what that means is judges who don’t act like partisan politicians.”](#)

**Endorsements**

Dietz has been endorsed by the [Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #9](#) and the [North Carolina Values Coalition](#), which supports the values of [“life, family, and religious freedom.”](#)

**Judicial Rulings**

- As a Superior Court judge in 2011, Inman [upheld](#) the Felony Firearms Act on the basis that a court should not interfere with the legislature’s judgment, when there was a rational connection between the legislature’s goal of public safety and the Act, which limited gun ownership rights for felons whose crimes involved firearms.
- On the North Carolina Court of Appeals, in 2017 Inman voted with the majority to find that [the responsibility to provide a sound basic education to North Carolina students rests with the state, not individual counties.](#)

**Statements**

- Inman wrote that when judges are deciding new issues, they [“must work to protect the rights provided by the Constitution from specific infringements that the original authors could not have anticipated,”](#) and that [“it may be appropriate to consider the context of present culture in attempting to determine how the founders would have resolved such an issue.”](#)
- She said, [“The United States Constitution and the North Carolina Constitution require equal protection under the law for everyone. Despite these principles, racial bias is ingrained in our institutional history, including our statutory and case law.](#) Acknowledging systemic racism does not require attributing ill will or racist intent to any person working in our criminal justice system today. Denying the problem prevents us from addressing it and undermines public confidence in our justice system.”
- Regarding the decision to make North Carolina judicial elections partisan, Inman said, [“Party labels in judicial elections have harmed North Carolina’s judicial system by giving political parties greater influence in the judicial branch and creating a barrier to judicial candidates who are not affiliated with any political party.”](#)

**Endorsements**

Inman has been endorsed by [EqualityNC](#), an LGBT+ rights organization, the [NC Sierra Club](#), the [North Carolina state AFL-CIO](#), and the National Association of Social Workers-NC.

