

Idaho District Judge Shoshone A

	Benjamin J. Allen	Lisa M. Chesebro
<p>1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?</p>	<p>Benjamin Allen - District Judge, 1st Judicial District</p> <p>I have always felt called to give back to my community wherever God has called me and my family. Over the past decade, it has been my privilege to serve the citizens of North Idaho in various public service capacities. I have embraced the role of the prosecuting attorney in keeping our communities safe, while at the same time, I have developed a deeper appreciation for how important the decisions of the judiciary are to this same end. Public persuasion and fears of litigation can greatly hinder society's willingness to stand up for what is right. In the past few years, we have seen decisions made by our judiciary drastically change the course of our society, highlighting the importance of having the right individuals serving in these positions who will uphold the law and advance justice. As a District Judge, I hope to bring a level of transparency to the bench that will instill confidence in our judiciary here in North Idaho.</p>	<p>My name is Lisa Chesebro, and I am running for District Judge, primarily serving Benewah and Shoshone counties. I am seeking this position to continue serving my community through fair, impartial application of the law. Throughout my career, I have worked within the judicial system and have seen firsthand the importance of a judge who is prepared, respectful, and committed to ensuring that every person is heard. I am running to bring experience, professionalism, and a strong commitment to the rule of law to the bench.</p>
<p>2. How could the judicial system be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.</p>	<p>Recent growth within our region has strained many of our public resources. As North Idaho attempts to adapt to this growth, it is imperative that we find ways to increase the efficiency of our courts and reduce the financial burden of administering justice. I am committed to upholding the constitution and promoting public confidence in our courts, while standing firm on my belief that the safety of our community should never be a point of compromise. As long as we are protecting these primary tenants of justice and order, we should explore ways to better integrate advancements in technology into court processes to increase efficiencies and reduce the costs placed on our taxpayers to operate our court systems. Additionally, frivolous litigation should be actively deterred so as to preserve court resources for matters of legitimate dispute, placing the burden of frivolous litigation on the responsible parties instead of the shoulders of our taxpayers.</p>	<p>First, continued focus on efficient case management to reduce delays and ensure timely resolution of cases. Second, expanding access to justice, including clear communication and resources for self-represented litigants. Third, supporting judicial and court staff training to ensure consistency, professionalism, and high-quality service across the system. These improvements strengthen public trust and ensure the courts remain accessible and effective.</p>

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3. What well-known U.S. or Idaho Supreme Court judge (living or deceased) do you most admire and why?	Former Idaho Supreme Court Chief Justice Daniel Eismann stands out to me among some of our most notable jurists. While attending the University of Idaho, Justice Eismann put his academic career on hold to serve our country in the Vietnam war where he was awarded two Purple Hearts. After returning stateside, he finished his law degree and set up practice in a small town in Idaho where he provided legal services to rural populations until he took the bench after just ten years of practice. Following a successful judicial career at both the magistrate and district court levels, he ran in a statewide election to earn a seat on the Idaho Supreme Court, an unconventional path to our state's highest court where most justices are brought on to the court through the appointment process. Regarded as one of the more conservative justices on the Court, Eismann also blazed trails for treatment courts and youth programs, emphasizing the importance of rehabilitation in a successful system of justice.	I respect judges who demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law, judicial restraint, and well-reasoned decision-making. For example, Sandra Day O'Connor is often noted for her thoughtful, case-by-case approach and respect for institutional balance. I value judges who focus on applying the law as written while recognizing the real-world impact of their decisions.
4. Many lawsuits have been filed against Christian bakers, florists and photographers over refusing to violate their conscience on the marriage issue. How do you view religious liberty/civil rights tension?	Recognizing that judges must carry out their adjudicative duties faithfully and impartially, a candidate running for judicial office must refrain from making comments that might impair the fairness of a matter which may come before them on the bench. Staying within the confines of this rule, it is reasonable to recognize that a judge's role is to apply the law, not to advance personal views or construe the constitution to comport with prevailing social ideologies. Both religious liberty and equal access under the law are important principles in our system of justice and the Constitution requires that each be taken seriously. When those principles come into tension, the focus must be on whether the law is being applied neutrally, without hostility toward religion, and in a way that respects constitutional protections.	Courts are often asked to resolve difficult questions where important rights intersect. A judge's role is not to impose personal beliefs, but to carefully apply the law and binding precedent to the facts of each case. This includes respecting constitutional protections, such as religious liberty and equal protection, and ensuring that each party receives a fair and impartial hearing.
5. Do you consider yourself a strict constructionist or judicial activist? Why?	Judges should apply the law - not attempt to make the law. Judges should not view their role as an instrument of social change. The people, through their elected representatives of the legislative branch of government, should retain the authority to decide the laws that govern society while our judiciary assists with interpreting those laws by applying them to the facts and circumstances presented in a given case.	Labels like these can mean different things to different people. My approach is grounded in judicial restraint. A judge's responsibility is to interpret and apply the law based on the text, applicable precedent, and the facts presented—without substituting personal views. My focus is on fairness, consistency, and adherence to the rule of law.

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6. What is your judicial philosophy on constitutional matters?	The brilliance of our Constitution is that our forefathers recognized that they could not account for every future need, but the principles and rights of the individual and limits of the government are meant to stand. Laws that require added, removed, or changed, aren't the role of the judge to do. The judge rightly applies law and its spirit without political influence or any other social agenda or prejudice.	My judicial philosophy is to apply the Constitution as written, guided by precedent and established principles of interpretation. Courts play a critical role in upholding constitutional protections, and that responsibility requires careful, neutral analysis. My role is to ensure that each case is decided based on the law and the facts, not personal preference.
7. What do you believe is the basis for law?	If we define law as the tangible adoption of rules and regulations, then law's foundation cannot also be human invention or our belief system on the basis of law would be circular. Law must be rooted in an objective moral order that exists because the universe has purpose and structure. As people, we recognize that order, and we desire our laws to reflect it by protecting dignity, rewarding honesty, and correcting transgressions. Order does not come from chaos, nor law from anarchy. When we acknowledge that mankind is not the source of right and wrong, then we can appreciate that a recognition of the basis of law requires an understanding of something greater than ourselves.	The basis for law is the Constitution, statutes enacted by the legislature, and the body of case law interpreting them. Together, these form the legal framework that governs our society. Judges are entrusted with applying this framework consistently and fairly.
8. Do you believe the Constitution is a living document? Why or why not?	I believe our Constitution should generally be viewed as enduring - not evolving. Judges should strive to interpret the text of the Constitution through the lens of its original intent. With this understanding, as our lives adapt to new inventions, advancements in technology, and physical differences over time, a prudent jurist must be able to find common sense application of the Constitution which can preserve the goals of our forefathers.	The Constitution provides a durable framework for governance, and its meaning is interpreted through both its text and judicial precedent. While courts must apply it to modern circumstances, that application must remain grounded in the language of the Constitution and established legal principles. The role of a judge is to interpret, not to amend.
9. What do you believe is the foundation for civil order and justice?	The foundation of civil order and justice should be centered on respect. Respect for the law, respect for each other, and respect for the institutions that serve our communities. A strong legal system depends on judges who apply the law consistently and fairly, without bias, and who recognize the importance of personal responsibility and community values. When people trust that the law will be applied evenly, it strengthens both public confidence in the judicial system and provides stability for our communities.	The foundation of civil order and justice is the rule of law—applied fairly, consistently, and impartially. Public confidence in the courts depends on the belief that decisions are made based on law and facts, not personal bias. Respect for due process and equal treatment under the law are essential to maintaining that trust.
10. What does common law mean to you?	Common law is generally considered the body of law derived from judicial decisions and precedent rather than statutes or formal legislation. To me, common law is the foundational, stabilizing force in the legal system—something that preserves tradition, limits judicial overreach, and reflects long-standing societal values.	Common law refers to legal principles developed through judicial decisions over time. It provides guidance where statutes may not address every issue and helps ensure consistency in how similar cases are decided. It is an important part of our legal system and works alongside statutes and constitutional law.

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<p>11. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position?</p>	<p>Raised on a family farm in Idaho, my hometown was supported by logging and mining. My father, a Vietnam veteran, instilled in me the importance of family, faith, and civility toward others. Hard work was not just a necessity, but a concept I have embraced in my career. I studied criminal justice in college and balanced multiple externships in law school, including a rural general practice firm which handled trusts & estates, real property disputes, business law, and other community needs. I clerked for a magistrate judge in the 7th Judicial District before transitioning to the US Attorneys Office where I was exposed to federal prosecution, prioritizing public safety. Leaning on that broad experience, I set out on a dual career path designed to encompass both types of law. Since that time, I have equally balanced both the role of a Prosecuting Attorney and managing partner of a general practice law firm, providing me with over a decade of both civil and criminal law experience.</p>	<p>Beyond my rural upbringing and love of the land, I have eighteen years of experience working within the judicial system, which has provided me with a strong understanding of courtroom procedure, case management, and the responsibilities of the bench. My background has required me to analyze legal issues, work with diverse parties, and uphold high professional standards. This experience has prepared me to serve as a fair, efficient, and impartial judge committed to the rule of law.</p>