

Parents' Rights and Children's Futures Depend on Fair Judges



Superior Court Judge Alice Dubow is on the ballot Tuesday, Nov 4.

Judge Dubow's decisions on the state court directly impact the lives of children.

Parent's Rights in Adoption Procedures

Can a "step-parent" adopt a child when it's in the child's best interests, even if the Adoption Act doesn't explicitly permit it?

This matters because children often form lasting parental relationships with adults outside of the narrow definition of "biological parent." If the law does not recognize those bonds, children risk losing a central figure in their lives.

Judge Dubow decided that the Adoption Act should be interpreted to allow a father's fiancée to adopt his children, even though the statute did not explicitly authorize such an adoption.



The judge found that the children had a true parental bond with the fiancée, wanted her to adopt them, and that the family functioned as a single unit. Meanwhile, the biological mother, who struggled with substance abuse, had not had meaningful contact with the children for two years. Judge Dubow emphasized that recognizing the adoption protected the children's stability and best interests.

Citation: In re: SLM; In re: TLM, 3 WDA 2020

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Juvenile Life Without Parole

Should an individual who committed a crime as a juvenile but demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation after decades in prison still face life without parole?

This matters because the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that juveniles are less culpable than adults and that sentencing courts must consider their capacity for change. A rigid approach that ignores evidence of rehabilitation undermines justice.

Judge Dubow decided that a trial court abused its discretion when it re-imposed a life without parole sentence on a defendant who had committed homicide as a juvenile, despite U.S. Supreme Court rulings that such mandatory sentences are unconstitutional.

The judge found that the trial court “completely ignored significant, uncontroverted evidence” that the defendant had matured and taken steps toward rehabilitation over 47 years in prison. By focusing only on the crime and disregarding decades of progress, the trial court failed to properly weigh the factors required by law.

Citation: Commonwealth v. Schroat, 272 A.3d 523 (Pa. Super. 2022)

Custody with a Non-Biological Parent

If it's in the child's best interests, should a non-biological parent have custody rights?

This matters because children often thrive in relationships with adults who act as parents, regardless of biological connection. When those relationships are severed, children may lose stability, love, and support critical to their well-being.

Judge Dubow affirmed a trial court's order awarding shared legal and physical custody to a biological mother and her former partner. The couple had planned for the child's conception together, decorated a nursery, and raised the child jointly — even giving the child the former partner's surname.



The judge found that the child was thriving under the 50/50 custody arrangement and concluded that maintaining that relationship served the child's best interests. By recognizing the role of the former partner as a parental figure, Judge Dubow protected the continuity of care and emotional security the child needed.

Citation: R.L. v. M.A., 209 A.3d 391 (Pa. Super. 2019)

Make Your Plan to vote on November 4th.

Step 1: Visit our voting center to find your polling place, request a mail-in ballot, and more!

Step 2: Share this [judicial election guide](#) with friends and family before you vote.

Step 3: Cast a ballot — either in person or by-mail — in this important election!

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