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The Philly Voter's Quick Guide to Judges

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Let's elect the best judges for our city

Do you resent standing in the polling booth, staring at the list of judicial candidates yet again with no idea who they are or how to choose between them? Does it undermine your faith in democracy? Or are you just resigned to it all? Either way, all you need to do is print this guide and take it to the polling booth, or pull up this website on your phone, and you can actually make informed, intelligent decisions about judges. When so few people vote for judges, if just a small portion of Philadelphians made informed choices,

imagine the effect they could have. On the website the Guide is in five sections, one for each court, or you can get it as one PDF. Click the links below to view,

- [Philadelphia Municipal Court candidates](#): Chosen by the people of Philadelphia only
- [Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia candidates](#): Philadelphia only
- [Superior Court of Pennsylvania candidates](#): Chosen by voters statewide
- [Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania candidates](#): Statewide
- [Supreme Court of Pennsylvania candidates](#): Statewide

In a hurry? Just print this PDF and take it with you!

We are non-partisan, non-profit, and accept no funding; we advocate for no candidates or positions. We simply have been frustrated by every judicial election for years, had an idea and put this together in a few days, just in time for the primary (we hope). We'll fix the table formatting and other issues after the vote; for now it works.

If you would like to know more, see the [About](#) page. Suggestions? Corrections? Omissions? Questions? Please [let us know](#) now, while you're thinking about it. It's our first year, after all, and are just getting started.

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Philadelphia Municipal Court

What does this court do?

[Philadelphia Municipal Court](#) is the lowest level court in Philadelphia. It has 25 Judges, and “is responsible for trying criminal offenses carrying maximum sentences of incarceration of five years or less, civil cases where the amount in controversy is \$12,000 or less for Small Claims; unlimited dollar amounts in Landlord and Tenant cases; and \$15,000 in real estate and school tax cases. Municipal Court has initial jurisdiction in processing every adult criminal arrest in Philadelphia, and conducts preliminary hearings for most adult felony cases.” Municipal Court judges serve for 6 year terms.

The candidates – choose up to 2

The candidates are listed in the order they appear on the ballot, to make the Guide easier to use in the ballot booth. What do the columns in the table all mean? They are explained [here](#).

The disciplinary records of the candidates ... are clean! We searched for the candidates in the Commonwealth of PA's records of disciplinary proceedings against both lawyers and judges, and we are happy and proud to say that we found nothing regarding this year's candidates for any court on the Philadelphia

ballot.

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Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Matt Wolf (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trial lawyer since 1993 - Labor & employment law representing discrimination victims - Major, U.S. Army Reserve - Loyola School of Law, 1993 	Recommended	None
Marissa Brumbach (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law clerk for 20 years, Philadelphia court system - Law practice, criminal defense and family law - Widener University School of Law, 1995 	Recommended	5
George Twardy (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General practice lawyer since 1992: personal injury, workmen's compensation, criminal 	Recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	defense & administrative law matters - Former Commissioner, Haverford Township - Widener School of Law, 1988		
Jon Marshall (Dem)	- MBA from Drexel - Temple Law	Recommended	None
Sherman Toppin (Dem)	- Lawyer for 19 years: civil litigation, real estate, estate & probate - Real estate broker - Extensive participation in community organizations - William and Mary School of Law	Not recommended	None
Bill Rice (Dem)	- Widener School of Law	Not recommended	None

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Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia

What does this court do?

The candidates – choose up to 9

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Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Stella Tsai (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.) (appointed 2016) - Archer & Greiner law firm - Counsel to the Phila. Civil Service Commission - Dept Chair, City of Phila. Law Dept - Christie, Pabarue law firm - Board member, Community College of Phila. - Board member, Zoning Code Commission - Significant professional recognition - Penn Law School, 1988 	Recommended	5
Vikki Kristiansson (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AEquitas - training on rape, domestic violence, human trafficking within the 	Recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Deborah Cianfrani (Dem)	justice system - Prosecutor & Deputy, NJ Office of Attorney General - human trafficking - Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office - sexual violence - Extensive involvement w/ organizations addressing sexual violence - Temple Law, 2003	Not recommended	None
John Macoretta (Dem)	- Spector, Roseman law firm: Class action antitrust & fraud, volunteer with homeowners facing foreclosure	Recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University of Texas Law School with honors, 1990 		
Rania Major (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General practice law firm: criminal defense, personal injury - Extensive participation in law & community orgs - Cumberland School of Law, 1987 	Not recommended	1
Henry M. Sias (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-founder, Phila. Lawyers for Social Equity - Law practice: primarily appellate, civil rights & immigration law - Blank Rome law firm - Yale Law School, 2005 - Of note - would be first trans judicial candidate in Phila. 	Recommended	5
Lawrence J. Bozzelli (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law practice: primarily criminal defense - Prosecutor, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office 	Recommended	1

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	- Temple Law, 1999		
Vincent Furlong (Dem & GOP)	- Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.) (appointed 2016) - Juvenile Master, Phila. Family Court - Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office - Deputy, PA Attorney General's Office - General practice law firm - Delaware (now Widener) Law School	Recommended	None
Brian McLaughlin (Dem)	- Law practice - criminal defense - Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office - Widener Law School, 1995	Recommended	3
Shanese Johnson (Dem)	- Law practice - primarily family law - Member of many law & community boards &	Not recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	organizations - Temple Law, 1995		
Mark B. Cohen (Dem)	- PA State Representative: 1974-2016 - Majority Caucus Leader in PA House - M.B.A. Lebanon Valley College, 2000 - Widener School of Law, 1993	Not recommended	3
Daniel R. Sulman (Dem)	- Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.) (appointed 2016) - Domestic Relations Master, Phila. Family Court - Former Democratic committeeperson - Member of many law organizations - Temple Law. 2000	Recommended	3.5
Leon Goodman (Dem)	- Law practice - primarily criminal defense & mental health issues	Recommended	2

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prosecutor, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office - Adjunct professor, Temple Law School - Villanova Law School, 1995 - LL.M. Temple Law 		
Deborah Canty (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Director of Quality Assurance & Corporate Compliance, ChildFirst Services - City Solicitor's Office, representing City of Phila. Dept of Human Services - Montgomery McCracken law firm - Temple Law, 2000 - Master of Social Work, U. of Penn, 1996 	Recommended	1
Wendi Barish (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deputy General Counsel, Phila. Housing Authority - Weber Gallagher law firm - civil rights & employment law 	Recommended	4

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Margolis Edelstein law firm - Law Offices of Thomas More Holland - Hofstra Law School, 1996 		
Leonard Deutchman (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-founder of KrollDiscovery - electronic discovery & computer forensics services - Prosecutor, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office - expertise in wiretaps, complex fraud, cybercrime - Rutgers (Newark) School of Law, 1985 - Ph.D. in English Literature, U. California (Berkeley), 1982 	Recommended	2
Zac Shaffer (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law practice - primarily criminal defense & disciplinary hearings - Temple Law, 2008 	Recommended	4
Jennifer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lawyer for Community 	Recommended	4.5

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Schultz (Dem)	Legal Services, 2005 - present: predatory lending, consumer rights, homeownership - Law Clerk for a U.S. District Court Judge - Cornell Law School, 2003		
Vincent Melchiorre (Dem)	- Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.) (appointed 2014 & 2016 by Gov's Corbett and Wolf) - General law practice - personal injury, commercial litigation, real estate - Board member, Phila. Federal Credit Union - Delaware (now Widener) Law School, 1983	Not recommended	4
Jon Marshall (Dem)	- MBA from Drexel - Temple Law	Recommended	None
David Conroy	- Law practice - criminal defense & personal injury	Recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
(Dem)	- Prosecutor, Philadelphia District Attorney's Office - Widener Law School, 1994		
Mark J. Moore (Dem)	- Law practice - insurance defense - Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office - Degree in Trial Advocacy, Temple Law - Villanova Law School, 1998	Recommended	None
Danyl S. Patterson (Dem)	- General law practice - civil, criminal & family law - Extensive participation in community organizations - Degree in Trial Advocacy, Temple Law, 2004 - Villanova School of Law, 2000	Not recommended	None
Terri M. Booker (Dem)	- General practice lawyer - Clerical Aide, Register of Wills, City of Philadelphia	Not recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Active in many community organizations - Pace Law School, 2010 		
Lucretia C. Clemons (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.) (appointed 2016) - Ballard Spahr law firm: corporate diversity management - Significant professional recognition - Temple Law cum laude, 1999 - Master's degree in diversity management, New York University 1996 	Recommended	5
Crystal B. Powell (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law practice: family law, child custody - Counsel, Phila. Housing Authority - Villanova Law School 	Not recommended	None
Bill Rice (Dem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Law Clerk, Phila. Court of Common Pleas 	Not recommended	None

Name	Experience	Phila Bar Assoc ratings	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	- Delaware (now Widener) Law School		

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Superior Court of Pennsylvania

What does this court do?

The [Superior Court of Pennsylvania](#) is one of two intermediate appeals courts in Pennsylvania (along with the [Commonwealth Court](#)): It hears appeals from lower courts, especially [Courts of Common Pleas](#). The Superior Court's decisions can be appealed to the [Pennsylvania Supreme Court](#), the highest state court in Pennsylvania. The Superior Court hears appeals for criminal and most civil cases, as well as for matters involving children and families. Superior Court judges serve for 10 year terms.

The candidates – choose up to 4

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Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Carolyn H. Nichols (Dem) (Phila. County)	- 2011-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.), Criminal Trial Division - 2008-2011: Law practice, employment discrimination - 2006-2008: Director, Minority Bus. Enterprise Council (City of Phila) - 2005-2006: Office of Mayor (City of Phila.) - 1999-2005: General Counsel, Phila Parking Authority -1996-1999: Law practice, employment discrimination - 1995-1996: Asst Legal Counsel, Phila Housing Development Corp. - Degree in Trial Advocacy, Temple Law, 1994 - Temple Law, 1985	Recommended	Recommended (Phila.)	None
Geoff Moulton (Dem) (Montgomery County)	- 2016-present: Judge, Superior Court of PA (appointed) - 2015-2016: Deputy General Counsel, Governor's Office of General Counsel (PA) - 2013-2014: Special	Highly Recommended	None found	None

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Maria McLaughlin (Dem) (Phila County)	Deputy, PA Atty General's Office - 2010-2011: Chief of Staff, Troubled Asset Relief Program (D.C.) - 2009-2010: Chief Counsel, U.S. Senator Edward Kaufman - 2001-2005: First Asst U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District PA) - 1993: U.S. Treasury Dept, Project Director, Waco Admin Review - 1990-1993: Law practice - 1986-1990: Asst U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office (Eastern District PA) - Columbia School of Law, 1984 - Of note: Clerk, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Rehnquist, 1985-1986 - 2012-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.), Family Court - 1992-2011: Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office, Child Support Enforcement Unit	Recommended	Highly Recommended (Phila.)	None

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	- Widener School of Law, 1992			
Debbie Kunselman (Dem) (Beaver County)	- 2005-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Beaver), Civil Division - 1998-2005: Solicitor, Beaver County Solicitor's Office - 1992-1994: Law practice: contract disputes, environment law, fraud - 1996-2005: Law practice: personal injury, family law & employment - Notre Dame School of Law cum laude, 1992	Highly Recommended	None found	None
Bill Caye (Dem) (Allegheny County)	- 2015-present: Law practice: criminal - 2015-2016: Legal consultant, BusinessLegal PC - 2006-2015: Deputy Attorney General, PA - 2000-2005: Special Master, Court of Common Pleas (Allegheny) - 1998-2006: Law practice: criminal - 1995-1998: Prosecutor, Allegheny County District	Not recommended	None found	None

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	Attorney's Office - Duquesne School of Law, 1993			
Emil Giordano (GOP) (Northampton County)	- 2004-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Northampton) - 1988-2003: Law practice, representing many municipalities and organizations - 1985-1987: Prosecutor, Broome County District Attorney's Office (NY) - Villanova School of Law, 1985	Highly Recommended	None found	None
Craig Stedman (GOP) (Lancaster County)	- 2008-present: District Attorney, Lancaster County District Attorney's Office - 1991-2008: Prosecutor, Lancaster County District Attorney's Office - Extensive participation in legal & community organizations - 1986-1994: U.S. Army Reserves military intelligence officer (honorable discharge) - Penn State School of Law magna cum laude, 1991	Highly Recommended	None found	None

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Wade Kagarise (GOP) (Blair County)	- 2014-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Blair) - 2001-2013: Law practice: family, civil & labor law - 1998-2013: Prosecutor, Blair County District Attorney's Office (part-time) - 1990-1996: U.S. Army Reserves (honorable discharge) - Widener School of Law, 1997	Recommended	None found	None
Mary Murray (GOP) (Allegheny County)	- Judge, Allegheny County Magisterial District for 13 years - Law practice for 20 years, primarily estate planning & administration - 1998-2004: Auditor, Moon Township (PA) - M.B.A., Duquesne University, 1995 - Duquesne School of Law, 1996	Not recommended	None found	None
Paula Patrick (GOP) (Phila County)	- 2003-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.), Civil, Criminal & Family Court - 2015: Interim City	Highly Recommended	Reommended (Phila.)	4

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	Commissioner (appointed) - 1994-2003: General law practice - Thurgood Marshall School of Law, 1993			

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Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania

What does this court do?

The [Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania](#) is one of two intermediate appeals courts in Pennsylvania (along with the [Superior Court](#)). The Commonwealth Court is “primarily responsible for matters involving state and local governments and regulatory agencies. It also acts as a trial court when lawsuits are filed by or against the Commonwealth [of Pennsylvania].” Decisions of the Commonwealth Court can be appealed to the [Supreme Court](#). Commonwealth Court judges serve for 10 year terms.

The candidates – choose up to 2

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Timothy Barry (Dem) (Allegheny)	- 1979-present: Law practice: municipal law, labor & employment law, public sector labor relations - 30 years: recovery plans for financially distressed municipality - Pitt Law, 1979	Recommended	Highly Recommended (Allegheny)	None found
Joe Cosgrove (Dem) (Luzerne)	- 2016-present: Judge, Commonwealth Court of PA (appointed) - 2015-2016: Counsel to the Administrative Office of PA Courts - 2014-2015: Chief Counsel, PA Supreme Court - 2010-2012: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Luzerne) (appointed) - 1993-2010: Indigent Defense Counsel, Luzerne County (PA) - 1983-2010: Solicitor, Pittston Township Zoning Hearing Board (PA) - 1988-1992: Solicitor, Luzerne County Recorder of	Highly Recommended	None found	None found

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	Deeds - Notre Dame Law School, 1982			
Ellen Ceisler (Dem) (Philadelphia)	- 2008-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Phila.), Criminal & Civil Trials - 2006-2008: Director, Phila. Controller Special Investigations Unit: municipal waste & fraud. - 2005-2006: Consultant, Phila. School District - 1997-2005: Director, Integrity & Accountability Office, Phila. Police Department - 1992-1994: Special Advisor, Office of the Sheriff - 1990-1992: Law practice: criminal & insurance defense - 1988-1990: Investigative Producer, WCAU-TV News (CBS) - 1986-1988: Prosecutor, Phila. District Attorney's Office - Temple Law, 1986	Recommended	Recommended (Phila.)	3.5
Todd Eagen	- 1998-present: Law	Recommended	None found	None found

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
(Dem) (Lackawanna)	practice, labor & employment law, private & public sector unions; emphasis on law enforcement - 1996-1997: General law practice, - Dickinson School of Law, 1996			
Irene M. Clark (Dem) (Allegheny)	- 2008-present: Law practice: community development, blighted property law & tangled titles - 2005-2008: Counsel, Community Economic Development Clinic - 2003-2005: Project Manager, Home Ownership Preservation Project - 1993-2003: Magistrate, Pittsburgh Municipal Court (appointed) - 1990-1993: Executive Assistant, Councilman Jim Ferlo (Pittsburgh) - M.A. concentration in conflict resolution, Antioch University, 1999 - CUNY Law (Queens), 1988	Not recommended	Not recommended	None found

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
Bryan Barbin (Dem) Cambria)	- 2009-present: PA State Rep, on House Judicial Committee - 1989-present: Law practice: state tax issues & administrative law - 1983-1989: Deputy Attorney General (PA), Tax & Finance Sectin - Pitt Law 1982	Recommended	None found	None found
Paul Lalley (GOP) (Allegheny)	- 2002- present: Law practice: public sector labor & employment, school law - 1997-2002: Law Clerk, PA Supreme Court - Dickinson School of Law, 1996	Recommended	Highly Recommended (Allegheny)	None found
Christine Fizzano Cannon (GOP) (Delaware)	- 2012-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Delaware), Civil Trial Division - 2008-2011: Delaware County Council (PA) - 2000-2007: Councilwoman, Middletown Township (PA) - 2003-2011: Solicitor, Southern Delaware County Authority, a municipal sewer authority	Highly Recommended	None found	None found

Name	Experience(Professional)	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2002-2007: Assistant County Solicitor, County of Delaware (PA)- 1996-2011: Law practice: municipal & municipal authority & commercial- 1996--1998: Prosecutor, Delaware County (PA) Child Support Enforcement- Extensive participation in legal and community organizations- Widener School of Law cum laude, 1994			

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Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

What does this court do?

The [Supreme Court of Pennsylvania](#) is the highest court in the state. It hears appeals of the decisions of lower courts and oversees the state court system, including lawyers and courts. Except when a seat has been prematurely vacated, there are seven judges, called justices, on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and they serve for 10 year terms.

The candidates – choose up to 1

And no matter which party's primary, if any, you are registered to vote in, there is only one choice on the ballot. That means someone already has chosen for us. Still, we gathered the same information about these candidates as we did about the candidates for other courts. What do the columns in the table all mean? They are explained [here](#).

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Dwayne Woodruff (Dem) (Allegheny)	- 2005-present: Judge, Court of Common Pleas (Allegheny), Family Court - 2003-present: Owner, Sports Entertainment Management Group, represents pro athletes. - 1997-2005: General law practice, also represented pro athletes in contract negotiations - 1997-2005: Executive, Capital Asset Research Corp., purchasing & servicing	Recommended	Recommended	5

Name	Experience	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	municipal tax liens - 1989-1997: Darragh Buckler law firm: product liability, insurance defense, municipality law, sports & entertainment law - Duquesne School of Law, 1988 - Of note: Played for the Pittsburgh Steelers from 1979-1990)			
Sallie Mundy (GOP) (Tioga)	- 2016-present: Justice, Supreme Court of PA (appointed) - 2010-2016: Judge, Superior Court of PA - 2008-2009: Volunteer Public Defender, Tioga	Highly Recommended	None found	1

Name	Experience	PA Bar Assoc ratings	Local bar assoc rating	NLG - Phila rating (progressive) (5 is highest)
	County - 1998-2009: McEldrew & Fullam law firm, primarily personal injury - 1988-1998: Law practice, primarily insurance defense - U. of Piitsburgh School of Law, 1987			

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