

**Alphonso Manns, Democratic Candidate for Monroe County Circuit Court
Responses to questions from the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
For the June 2, 2020 Primary Election**

1. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the way that the court system is handling its work. In some ways, the period offers an opportunity to reset. Are there any changes to the circuit court system that you'd support post-pandemic? How would you advocate to implement those changes?

At the present time, the Indiana Supreme Court has closed all courthouses until May 17, 2020. The hearings and trials have been rescheduled to sometime in the future. The court can turn to telephone and teleconferencing for certain kinds of proceedings, such as pre-trial conferences between judges and attorneys, but the latter means of communication is not technically available to the court and attorneys, unless the Indiana Supreme Court authorizes them to conduct proceedings through Zoom, or similar media pathways. However, arguments before the court at all levels of proceedings are possible and can be publicly displayed as it is done at times before the Indiana Supreme Court. Our experience with the O.J. Simpson jury trial probably left many with a dislike for using television as a medium for making trials available to the public, but certainly, the idea should be given post-pandemic consideration. Technological advances will undoubtedly will lead to innovation and ideas to apply them to the judicial system, as they have with our healthcare system.

2. Monroe County government has undertaken a criminal justice study. What changes to the current system do you support, and why?

I have not seen or read the criminal justice study. My assessment of the study would depend upon the manner it was conducted. I do not know whether the study is quantitative, qualitative, or mix-mode. I would be concerned about how rigorous were the researchers in the conduct of their research, and whether the study has validity and trustworthiness.

3. What are the top challenges facing Monroe County Circuit Court, and how do you propose addressing those challenges?

I think that one of the top challenges of the Monroe County Circuit Court is dealing with pro se litigants. Each participant should be treated with dignity and respect such that there is a clear recognition of demonstrating empathy and understanding of the litigants' points of view on the facts. However, the judge must be objective and fair to all parties in applying the principles of law and display a level of temperament that shows he or she is their public servant.