



Judicial Campaign Watch

Wisconsin
Judicial Campaign
Integrity Committee

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Don't Base a 10-year Judicial Term on a 30-second Ad

April 2, 2009 – As the 2009 campaign for the Wisconsin Supreme Court winds down, the Wisconsin Judicial Campaign Integrity Committee (WJCIC) has raised concerns about new ads and cautioned voters to be highly skeptical of all 30-second ads as they decide who should serve a ten-year term on the state Supreme Court.

“The reality of modern campaigning is that candidates and their supporters rely heavily on 30-second TV ads to get their message across. However, because judicial candidates don’t advocate traditional public policy goals like cutting taxes or fixing roads, these ads are ill-suited to addressing the only real issue in most judicial elections: who can best serve the impartial interests of justice. The best advice we can give voters is to do their own research and not rely on political ads that level sensational or unsubstantiated charges,” said Tom Basting, non-voting chair of the WJCIC.

Basting said that this year’s low-key campaign for a seat on the seven-member Wisconsin Supreme Court is a welcome change from last year’s bombastic charges and counter-charges. He also praised [WisconsinEye](#), Wisconsin’s Internet- and cable-based public affairs network, which offers [archived](#) candidate debates, interviews, speeches and other resources to help voters make an informed choice.

“Rely on resources like WisconsinEye and local media to seek out information about the candidates and equip yourself to vote on Tuesday, April 7,” Basting urged.

Basting said that committee members are particularly concerned about two new 30-second ads. One [new ad](#) authorized by the third-party group “Greater Wisconsin Committee” claims that Judge Randy Koschnick “sides with the wealthy and power” and another [new ad](#) authorized by the campaign of Judge Koschnick, charges his opponent, Justice Shirley Abrahamson, with “siding with criminal defendants 60% of the time.” Basting stressed that, “aside from the question of how inherently unreliable and misleading any ‘statistics’ supporting such claims are, the ads are troubling because they inappropriately foster the incorrect perception that judges do, in fact, ‘take sides’ when deciding cases. The public needs to be reassured that this is not the role of judges in Wisconsin and, in fact, is antithetical to their role,” Basting stressed. “Judges are elected to fairly and impartially apply the facts of each case to the relevant law. That’s very different than a city councilman ‘siding’ with one group or the other in a zoning dispute or a legislator taking one side or the other on a proposed piece of legislation.”

For more information, visit the committee’s website at: <http://www.wifaircourts.com>.

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