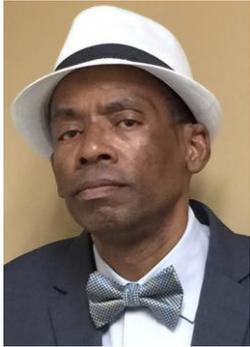


A Better Way to Elect Judges

By Al Mccray

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This Election season is just about over. Among the many candidates seeking office or re-election are a number of judges.

Judges have a lot of influence and have intricate position in the judicial system. Rulings pass down by judges have a profound effect on the lives of citizens and industries. Being a judge is tough order to fill. They, like others seeking office for the most part, must campaign, raise money, make public appearances and be gone from their homes and families for the duration of the campaign season. A great deal of the candidates' time is spent on raising money on the campaign trail.

Judges raising money opens the door to questions of being influenced on the bench and possibly returning favors to campaign contributors. Those with the most to gain by supporting a winning judicial candidate are lawyers. Lawyers are a prime group that contributes to fund raising efforts of judicial candidates. Lawyers are the most knowledgeable about judicial candidates. Lawyers and judges share a common custodianship in the judicial system.

Many states Bar Associations have strict guidelines for how much involved a judicial candidate can personally be when it comes to raising money for their own campaign. The United States Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case originating from Tampa Florida about a judicial candidate personally involved soliciting for money for their election.

Lawyer Lanell Williams-Yulee ran afoul in 2009 with the Florida Bar by personally signing campaign fund raising letter in a previous campaign. Depending how the Supreme Court rules, even if Judicial candidates can directly raise campaign funds will not prevent the risk of the judiciary being influenced by their contributors, mainly lawyers.

These campaign contributing lawyers interact with the judges and their staff on a regular and routine basis in their judicial circuits. They shop are the same stores, attend churches together, gather at judicial circuits meetings and they most certainly cross paths in the court house buildings or at the health spa and gyms. Any physical interaction between Judges and contributors lawyers or not, is an opportunity for influence peddling or furthering social connections.

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For School Board - District 6 (COUNTYWIDE)

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Education is the building block on which a child prepares for life. The children are our future. My mission is to make sure that Hillsborough County prepares its students with the tools to succeed and achieve their dreams.

I am a mom, a business owner, an attorney, and the wife of a physician. I understand the impact of our schools on our families, businesses, and community.



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District 6 is a countywide seat. Any registered voter in Hillsborough County can vote in District 6
Primary election is August 26, 2014

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The solution to this atmosphere of possible judicial misconduct is simple. Separate the judges and the judicial candidates from the money contributors be they be lawyers or any other persons or groups.

In my state of Florida, there are twenty judicial circuits. I live in Tampa which is in the 13th circuit. All but five of these circuits spans multiple counties.

Here is what I propose;

1. Judicial candidates can personally solicit money from any source as long as its disclosed.
2. After the election, the winner for each judgeship would be assigned to a circuit at least two circuits away from where the election was fund raising occurred.
3. It would be a random assignment.
4. The judges' local staff would not be transferred to the other circuits.
5. The elected judges would have to move and reside into the transferred the circuit.

When the next election occurs the process would repeat itself.

With the elected judges in circuits others than where the money was raised it would pose huge obstacles for influence peddling. In the new judicial district the new judges would not have any affinities with the local judicial system. The new circuit will cause the new judges not to be loyal to any one particular faction.

Al Mccray