

1029 W. Third Avenue, Suite 201, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-1969 http://www.ajc.state.ak.us

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### **Press Release**

September 5, 2012

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## **Press Release**

September 5, 2012

# The Alaska Judicial Council Recommends that Alaskans Vote "YES"

### to Retain all Judges on the Ballot in 2012.

In Alaska, voters get to decide whether judges should serve another term in office. In the general election on November 6<sup>th</sup>, Alaskans will be asked to vote "yes" or "no" to retain trial judges eligible for retention in their respective judicial districts. In addition, all Alaskans will be asked to vote "yes" or "no" to retain a justice on the Alaska Supreme Court and a judge on the Alaska Court of Appeals.

Not all of Alaska's judges are on the ballot, only those whose most recent terms are expiring. There are four judicial districts in Alaska. In the First Judicial District, trial judges from Juneau and Ketchikan will be on the ballot. In the Second Judicial District, the trial judge from Barrow will be on the ballot. The ballot in the Third Judicial District will include trial judges from Anchorage, Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez and Palmer. In the Fourth Judicial District, trial judges from Fairbanks will be on the ballot.

To help voters make informed decisions about judges, Alaska law requires the Alaska Judicial Council to evaluate each judge eligible to stand for retention, and to publicize its findings. *The Judicial Council recommends that Alaskans vote "yes" to retain all judges on the ballot in* 2012.

The Alaska Judicial Council is an independent citizen's commission established in Alaska's constitution. Three non-attorneys, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, and three attorneys appointed by the Alaska Bar Association Board of Governors constitute the Council. These members volunteer their time and serve staggered six year terms. The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court presides as chair ex officio, and only votes when his or her vote can affect an outcome.

Judicial Council evaluations provide a thorough source of objective information about judicial performance. The Council reviews a judge's legal ability, impartiality and fairness, integrity, temperament, diligence, and overall performance. To obtain this information, the Council surveys thousands of Alaskans including peace and probation officers, court employees, attorneys, jurors, social workers and guardians ad litem about the judges on the ballot. Survey respondents rate judges on these criteria and may submit comments about the judge's performance. The Council also solicits specific feedback from attorneys who appeared before the judge in recent cases. The Council reviews ratings and observations of the Alaska Judicial Observers, independent community-based volunteers. The Council tracks how often a judge was disqualified from presiding over a case and how often a trial judge was affirmed or reversed on appeal. The Council examines any civil or criminal litigation involving the judge; APOC and court system conflict-of-interest statements filed by a judge; any disciplinary files involving the judge; and whether a judge's pay was withheld for an untimely decision. The Council reviews other court records, listens to court proceedings, and investigates judicial conduct in specific cases. The Council interviews some judges, attorneys, court staff, and others as necessary. The Council solicits feedback about judges on its website and holds a statewide public hearing to obtain comments about judges. The Alaska Judicial Council publicizes more information about the performance of judges than any other judicial evaluation in the country, and perhaps the world.

Alaskan voters can learn more about the Alaska Judicial Council's evaluation of the performance of judges by visiting the Council's website at **knowyouralaskajudges.com**. The State of Alaska's Official Elections Pamphlets, published by the Division of Elections in October, will include the Council's recommendations and summaries of the Council's evaluation.

The judges recommended for retention in 2012 are:

**Appellate Justices/Judges** 

Superior Court Judge William Barker Carey - Ketchikan District Court Judge Keith B. Levy - Juneau District Court Judge Thomas G. Nave - Juneau

### **Second Judicial District**

Superior Court Judge Michael I. Jeffery - Barrow

### Third Judicial District

Superior Court Judge Steve W. Cole - Kodiak Superior Court Judge Gregory Louis Heath - Palmer Superior Court Judge Charles T. Huguelet - Kenai Superior Court Judge William F. Morse - Anchorage Superior Court Judge Frank A. Pfiffner - Anchorage Superior Court Judge Eric Smith - Palmer Superior Court Judge John Suddock - Anchorage Superior Court Judge Sen K. Tan - Anchorage Superior Court Judge Philip R. Volland - Anchorage Superior Court Judge Michael L. Wolverton - Anchorage District Court Judge J. Patrick Hanley - Anchorage District Court Judge Margaret L. Murphy - Homer District Court Judge Daniel Schally - Valdez District Court Judge Alex M. Swiderski - Anchorage District Court Judge David R. Wallace - Anchorage District Court Judge Pamela Scott Washington - Anchorage District Court Judge David L. Zwink - Palmer

### **Fourth Judicial District**

Superior Court Judge Paul R. Lyle - Fairbanks Superior Court Judge Michael P. McConahy - Fairbanks District Court Judge Patrick S. Hammers - Fairbanks

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