

MEDIA ADVISORY



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American Judicature Society Response to Announcement by Former Gubernatorial Candidate Bob Vander Plaats

Iowa's courts are among the best in the nation, and they should remain free from political pressure. The campaign by former gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats and the Common Sense PAC to vote out three Iowa Supreme Court justices threatens to undermine Iowa's fair and impartial court system. Retention elections should not be hijacked by moneyed politicians and outside interest groups who disagree ideologically with a single decision.

In 2010, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recognized Iowa's judiciary as one of the best in the nation. Iowa was ranked fourth in the country for judges' impartiality, third in the country for jury fairness, and fifth overall. The rankings demonstrate that Iowa's merit selection system has been effective at promoting fair and impartial courts that encourage a vibrant business community and guarantee equal justice for all Iowans.

Judges make thousands of decisions that affect the lives of Iowans. Iowa's merit-based selection system is designed to guarantee high quality judges who will be held accountable to the law rather than well-funded special interests.

A fair and impartial judiciary is essential to a strong and healthy democracy. As such, Iowa voters can and should seek reliable information about the performance of judges before voting in retention elections, such as the voter information that will be provided by the Iowa Judicial Branch and the Iowa State Bar Association.

The American Judicature Society www.ajs.org, headquartered in Des Moines, is a national non-profit organization of concerned citizens, lawyers, judges, and scholars dedicated to preserving fair and impartial courts and improving the administration of justice.

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