

## Committee expresses concern about Supreme Court candidate's use of governor's endorsement; she replies

*The Committee delivered the following letter today to Court of Appeals Judge Pamela Goodwine, a candidate for the Kentucky Supreme Court.*

Dear Judge Goodwine:

The Kentucky Judicial Campaign Conduct Committee is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan group organized to safeguard the integrity of the judiciary in Kentucky judicial elections. We believe judicial elections are different from other elections, for good reason, and should remain that way. We are concerned about the recent increase of partisanship in judicial elections, as evidenced by our public statements in 2022 about the Northern Kentucky race for the Supreme Court (published on our website, listed above).

We are likewise concerned that Gov. Andy Beshear's political action committee has endorsed your candidacy for the Kentucky Supreme Court. He is Kentucky's highest-ranking official who is elected on a partisan basis, and is widely known as a Democrat, so we believe that if you were to refer to his endorsement in your campaign, that would violate the spirit of Section 117 of the Kentucky Constitution, which makes judicial elections nonpartisan.

The intent of that section is to separate the judiciary from partisan politics, and maintaining that separation has long been a major interest of our Committee, which is made up of Democrats, Republicans and independents. We have expressed our concerns to the governor, and now we express them to you.

The Executive Branch often appears before the Kentucky Supreme Court. This could present an appearance of conflict, if not actual conflict, for any justice who was supported by the sitting governor. While a justice may recuse from a case, the governor appoints the temporary replacement justice. So, we think members of the Executive Branch, especially the governor, should not be involved in judicial elections.

Now that the governor is involved in your campaign, it is largely up to you what to make of his endorsement. While you certainly have every right to use it, we believe doing so would further blur the line between judicial and partisan elections, and have the effect of eroding public confidence in the impartiality of the judiciary.

Our Committee may make a public statement on this matter, but before we do that, we would like to hear from you, either in writing, in person or an online meeting.

*The Committee received the following response from Judge Goodwine this evening:*

Throughout my 25 years of dedicated service as a judge, I have earned respect from members of all political parties as well as a solid reputation for serving with the utmost honesty, integrity, ethics, impartiality, fairness and justice for all. I am committed to continuing to demonstrate these principles on the Kentucky Supreme Court and remaining unbiased in my decision making.

Having served as a judge for over two decades and as a candidate for the Kentucky Supreme Court, I take ethical considerations very seriously and take to heart the importance of maintaining impartiality and upholding the integrity of the judiciary. I have dedicated my life and career to serving with the highest ethical standards and base each of my judicial decisions on the law and the merits of each case.

The voluntary endorsement of Governor Beshear is based upon my record of impartiality, fairness and justice. “The governor believes that judges should decide cases by the letter of the law and not by the letter of anyone’s party registration,” Eric Hyers reported on behalf of Governor Beshear earlier this year.

The best and most qualified candidates receive endorsements from a wide array of individuals and organizations based upon their records of exemplary service and any person or organization could potentially be called before any member of the judiciary.

My steadfast commitment to the nonpartisan nature of the judiciary is evidenced in my participation in events hosted by both Republicans and Democrats, including the Jessamine County Republican Women’s Club meeting, Fayette County Republican Party Reagan Day Dinner, Franklin County Democratic Executive Committee meeting, and the Forward Together Dinner where Governor Beshear said of the need for both parties to collaborate for the good of the Commonwealth “not left, not right, but forward together!”

Upon election to the Kentucky Supreme Court, I will continue to adhere to the highest ethical standards and, if faced with a situation where my impartiality was reasonably called into question, I would carefully consider the circumstances and if necessary recuse myself to ensure the integrity of the judicial process.