

Keep Our Courts Fair! Support the Impartial Justice Act

Summary:

Currently Minnesotans have little to no information about judges up for election; they have no real power to hold judges accountable; and they are at risk of losing their courts to special interests and big money politics. There is no legal requirement that can stop the influx of large special interest contributions to judicial campaigns. While Minnesota has not seen the same high price judicial elections as our neighboring states, it is important to act now before special interests have tainted our judicial election system.

Support the Impartial Justice Act:

Minnesotans can take an immediate step to prevent the politicization of judicial elections by supporting the Impartial Justice Act SF 1082 / HF 1083. The bill codifies the merit selection of Minnesota judges and establishes judicial retention elections and performance evaluations. It will give voters a greater voice when electing judges while keeping our judicial system and judges away from the influence of politics and money and focused on making fair and impartial decisions.

- ***Public performance evaluations empower voters with information about judges and their records***
 - The bill establishes a Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission consisting equally of representatives from all three branches of state government with a majority membership of non-attorneys. A transparent evaluation process gives voters information about the performance of their judges to use when deciding whether a judge should retain their position.
- ***Retention elections prevent judges from running unopposed***
 - Currently Minnesota has contested judicial elections, but over 90% of judges run unopposed. This process gives voters the opportunity to hold a judge accountable in only 10% of judicial elections.
 - Retention elections allow voters to choose whether to retain a judge in his or her current position or to recall them. This gives voters the ability to hold a judge accountable 100% of the time.
- ***The merit selection process sends nominees to the Governor for appointment***
 - The bill creates a bipartisan commission, created for the purpose of impartially soliciting judicial candidates, evaluating applicants, and recommending nominees to the governor for appointment, guaranteeing that no special interest can "buy" a seat on the bench.
 - Nearly all Minnesota district court judges have reached the bench through an appointment process based on merit and the current system would be only slightly modified under the Act.

