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JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION COMMISSION
RELEASES EVALUATIONS ON ONE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE; THREE COURT
OF APPEALS JUDGES AND 12 METROPOLITAN COURT JUDGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—September 15, 2006

ALBUQUERQUE – The New Mexico Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC) today released its recommendations to voters on 16 justices and judges standing for retention in the upcoming election. To remain on the bench, these individuals must receive at least 57 percent voter approval under the New Mexico State Constitution.

“We are pleased to report that we have seen an improvement in the state’s judiciary, in part due to the evaluation process and to the changes we have seen by those who have accepted and acted on our suggestions that they improve,” said Felix Briones, Jr., chair of JPEC. “Therefore, we are recommending that voters retain all justices and judges standing for retention on this year’s ballot,” he continued.

This year, the JPEC’s recommendations to voters statewide are:

Retain Honorable Edward L. Chavez, Supreme Court of New Mexico
Retain Honorable Cynthia A. Fry, New Mexico Court of Appeals
Retain Honorable Lynn Pickard, New Mexico Court of Appeals
Retain Honorable Jim Wechsler, New Mexico Court of Appeals

In Bernalillo County, JPEC is also making recommendations on 12 Metropolitan Court judges:

Retain Honorable Sandra J. Clinton
Retain Honorable Kevin L. Fitzwater
Retain Honorable Theresa A. Gomez
Retain Honorable Victoria J. Grant
Retain Honorable J. Wayne Griego
Retain Honorable Cristina T. Jaramillo
Retain Honorable Anna G. Martinez
Retain Honorable Judith K. Nakamura
Retain Honorable Daniel Ramczyk
Retain Honorable Frank A. Sedillo
Retain Honorable Victor E. Valdez
Retain Honorable Sharon D. Walton

The Supreme Court of New Mexico established the JPEC in 1997. The JPEC evaluates justices and judges standing for retention who have served on the bench for at least two years in their current position.

(MORE)

JPEC Makes 2006 Recommendations—Only add

The Commission evaluates justices and judges in four main areas:

- 1) legal ability
- 2) fairness
- 3) communication skills, and
- 4) preparation, attentiveness, temperament and control over proceedings.

Briones explained, “We use a very rigorous, objective evaluation process.” An independent research firm distributes thousands of surveys to individuals who have had direct contact or interaction with the justice or judge being evaluated. “We gather and analyze the results of those surveys, then meet with the justice or judge being interviewed to review the survey results as well as to review their self-assessment of performance. Our evaluations also include information on the justice’s or judge’s experience and education,” Briones said.

Briones emphasized the evaluations report on the “positive and negative results received from users of the courts – high ratings, mixed ratings, generally positive ratings or low ratings.”

He continued, “Unfortunately, those judges who express little desire to improve and whose scores continue to decline are subject to ‘do not retain’ recommendations from the JPEC. We are pleased that none of the justices or judges being evaluated this year merited this type of recommendation.”

The JPEC has complete evaluations on its website at www.nmjpec.org, and will also distribute information to voters through statewide newspaper advertising, radio advertising and a special “Report to Voters” in the Sunday, Oct. 8, issue of the *Albuquerque Journal*.

“Absentee voting begins Tues., Oct. 10, 2006; early voting begins Sat., Oct. 21; and Election Day is Tues., Nov. 7. We encourage each and every voter throughout the state of New Mexico to vote in all elections for which they are eligible – including the judicial retention elections,” Briones concluded.

For judicial performance evaluation information on each judge or justice, visit www.nmjpec.org or call Louise Baca-Sena at the Administrative Office of the Courts,(505) 827-4960.

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