

## Your Response Can Help Improve Our Judiciary

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Next year, we may set a record in the number of district court judges standing for retention. We have the potential to see as many as 84 district court judges (compared to 62 district judges in 2002) and four appellate court judges standing for retention on the 2008 ballot. To stay on the bench, these individuals must receive at least 57% voter approval.

That is next year, but there is a step that many attorneys throughout the state can take **this year** to help shape next year's ballot and improve our judiciary. The New Mexico Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission (JPEC) will make recommendations to voters on whether to retain judges based on an objective performance in four main areas: legal ability; fairness; communication skills; and preparation, attentiveness, temperament and control over proceedings. This evaluation will be based, in part, on feedback we receive from **you** between April and September 2007.

In late April 2007, confidential surveys will be mailed by an independent research firm to attorneys who have had direct experience with district judges residing in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Districts. These districts encompass Chaves, Curry, De Baca, Doña Ana, Eddy, Grant, Harding, Hidalgo, Lea, Lincoln, Luna, Otero, McKinley, Quay, Roosevelt and San Juan counties.

In August 2007, confidential surveys will be mailed to attorneys who have had direct experience with district judges residing in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial Districts. These districts encompass Bernalillo, Catron, Cibola, Colfax, Guadalupe, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Miguel, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Sierra, Socorro, Taos, Torrance, Union and Valencia counties.

The surveys have from 12-20 questions, including both closed-ended and open-ended questions in which you have the opportunity to provide additional information. You may be asked to evaluate one or more district judges whom you have appeared before or with whom you have had professional contacts. You may also receive a reminder phone call from the independent research firm.

Your responses to these surveys can help us help a judge improve his or her performance on the bench. They can also give us the information we need to provide fair and accurate evaluations to the public. This year we hope to improve the rate of response from attorneys, who in many cases are the most prepared to evaluate a judge's overall performance. In 2005, the overall response rate from all attorneys on District Court surveys was approximately 30%.

We are all busy. If you receive a survey or surveys, please take a few moments to fill them out. Your responses will be confidential. Your comments will not be provided to the judges. All individual responses will be destroyed. The JPEC will receive only the aggregate results from the independent research firm. Most importantly, you will be doing the public a service. The more responses we receive from you -- the legal community -- the more accurate we can make our evaluations.

Thank you, in advance, for your help.