



TO: Senate Judiciary Committee

FROM: Barry Kauffman, Executive Director, CC/PA

SUBJECT: Merit Selection of Judges

DATE: September 24, 2008

While, due to prior commitments, Common Cause/PA was unable to present testimony in support of Senate Bills 1324 and 1325 at last week's Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, we want to reinforce our support for merit selection of judges.

For two decades, Common Cause/PA has been an ardent advocate for merit selection of judges. We believe that merit selection significantly enhances the probability for Pennsylvania's appellate courts to be populated with justices and judges characterized by their intellect, high levels of training, judicial temperament, and reason, rather than their political skills and ability to secure large campaign contributions. Merit selection also should give citizens greater reason to believe that judges and justices will be loyal to the rule of law rather than campaign donors, and eliminate possibilities for conflicts between the two.

While we reserve the right to offer suggestions for improving the composition of the Appellate Court Nominating Commission, and other aspects of the bills, we sincerely hope that the General Assembly will move bills akin to SB-1324 and SB-1325 early in the 2009-10 session so that voters of this commonwealth soon can have the opportunity to determine if they want to elevate the quality of our judiciary via such reforms.

Thank you for considering our support for these merit selection efforts. If you wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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