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Tom Riley
(Retired)

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Dear Friends,

Will you feel that you can get a fair trial if you know the other party has contributed money to the judge? In Iowa, judges cannot even accept a gift of lunch.

That fair system is being threatened by out-of-state organizations that are spending big money on attack ads, encouraging Iowans to vote against three Supreme Court justices because of the Court's ruling in the same sex marriage case. Whether you are personally happy or unhappy with the ruling, you can be assured that under Iowa's system of selecting judges, the decision was reached by each Justice's impartial interpretation of the Iowa Constitution and Bill of Rights. It was not influenced by money, political pressure or popular sentiment.

Iowa's courts have gained national recognition for their independence and fairness. The United States Chambers of Commerce rate Iowa's courts as one of the most fair and impartial in the country. This ranking benefits our state economically. Businesses know that if they come to Iowa and need the services of our judicial system, they will be given a fair shake. If judges are voted out because they decided a tough case in a way that some people don't like, and out-of-state organizations succeed in influencing the outcome of the retention vote, in the future, judges may be forced to raise money and campaign to retain their jobs. Our judiciary will become politicized and its independence undermined.

Every year, Iowa judges preside over millions of cases that affect Iowans in real ways – business disputes, personal injury cases, child custody and criminal matters. For our justice system to work for everyone parties to those cases must have confidence that politics and the money that goes along with it plays no role in the judge's decisions. It doesn't now, and we should make sure that it would not in the future.

I urge you to learn about your judges who are up for retention. Visit www.learniowacourts.org to learn more. I would also encourage you to visit www.iowabar.org to view the results of a survey (called a "plebiscite") in which lawyers assess the performance of Iowa judges.

If you have additional questions, please feel contact me.

Sincerely,



Mark E. Liabo

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