

James H. Thomas, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the Lancaster Bar Association announced the Committee's ratings of the candidates for the six judgeships to the Court of Common Pleas of Lancaster County to be elected in 2007. The candidates were rated as "highly recommended", "recommended", or "not recommended".

Rated as "highly recommended" were Stephen W. Cody, Heidi F. Eakin, Samuel M. Mecum, Margaret Concannon Miller, Jeffrey J. Reich and Donald R. Totaro.

A "recommended" rating was given to Kevin C. Allen, Christopher A. Hackman, Howard F. Knisley, Katherine B. Kravitz, John P. Stengel and Jeffery D. Wright.

Candidates who received a rating of "not recommended" were M. Lucile Longo, Gerald S. Robinson and William W. Campbell. Campbell's "not recommended" rating was based on his failure to submit to the Bar Association's professional review of his qualifications for the position of Judge.

The Judiciary Committee is a 17-member group of lawyers chosen to assure wide representation of the Bar. Six are recent Bar presidents, four are chairs or former chairs of committees or sections of the Association, five are members-at-large elected by the Association, and two are members at-large appointed by the president. The Committee collectively represents nearly 400 years of practicing law in the community. "Special care is taken", Thomas said, "to avoid conflicts of interest between members of the Committee and any candidate."

The Committee functions whenever there is a judicial election. Announced candidates complete an extensive questionnaire providing information related to integrity, legal knowledge and ability, professional experience, judicial temperament, diligence, health, financial responsibility and public service. The names of candidates are distributed to all members of the Bar Association with a survey on whether the candidates can be recommended. The Committee compiles the survey results and interviews the candidates. The interviews are focused on whether the candidates possess the special qualities of character, temperament, professional aptitude and experience needed for judicial office.

Choosing six new judges in a single election is unprecedented in the history of Lancaster County. The November, 2007 election will determine the face of the judiciary in the county for the next several decades. "The Bar Association recognizes and respects the fact that judges are elected and that elections are part of the political process," Thomas said. "However," he added, "the Committee operates on a completely non-partisan basis. The ratings are designed as a public service to help voters make informed judgments about the candidates. The Code of Judicial Conduct restricts what judicial candidates can say or do in an election campaign. Most people don't think much about qualifications for a judge until they need one. But unlike a surgeon whom you can select, the assignment of cases to a judge is random. Parties have no choice over who will preside over what is often some of the most significant matters in their lives. While the public may not focus on a judge's performance, lawyers do. It is in the day-to-day work

with these candidates that fellow lawyers learn about the special qualities that a judge should possess. The ratings reflect this judgment."

Thomas reported that the Committee collectively spent hundreds of hours in the process. "The Bar Association takes this responsibility very seriously and believes the ratings are a real contribution to the common good of the community."

Thomas emphasized that the ratings reflect the Judiciary Committee's best judgment of these particular candidates at this particular time with respect only to their qualifications for a common pleas judgeship. A "not recommended" rating for a judgeship is not in any way a reflection on a candidate's abilities as a practicing attorney or other legal professional.