

October 5, 2010

AN OPEN LETTER TO KING COUNTY ATTORNEYS:

We are writing to voice our enthusiastic support for the re-election of Judge Edsonya Charles to the Seattle Municipal Court.

Judge Charles has earned our trust and our vote of confidence. First appointed to the Seattle Municipal Court in 2004, Judge Charles has the depth of knowledge, experience and track record we need on the court, demonstrating time and again that she's the best choice for the job. She brings to our Municipal Court the needed intellect, sensibility and compassion – all impressive qualities – but it is her honest, principled approach and her unwavering integrity that make her one of our most valued leaders.

Edsonya Charles has dedicated herself to a life of community service, believing we all have an obligation to give back. Judge Charles has set an example for all of us, and her leadership on our Municipal Court is no different. She works hard to make the court system responsive and accountable to all the citizens it is meant to serve – implementing needed reforms, while ensuring that justice is done.

Judge Charles is committed to ensuring a fair hearing and open access to justice in her courtroom. She has set high standards and expects everyone – beginning with herself – to adhere to a strict code of conduct. She has heard hundreds of criminal and civil cases, and her record is clear: Judge Charles is fair, yet tough minded.

Judge Edsonya Charles makes thoughtful, informed, and independent decisions, free from the influence of any special interests. And, as media reports have recently revealed, it is for this very reason that Judge Charles now finds herself the target of an orchestrated attack, as she seeks re-election – an attack with such dangerous consequences we are compelled to take a stand and speak out.

We know that today's politics are polluted with campaigns of distortions and lies, funded by special interest groups seeking to gain advantage. These narrow interests wage intensely negative campaigns, without regard to the damage they inflict. These selfish, "win at any cost" campaigns take a heavy toll on our community, leaving the rest of us disgusted, cynical, and mistrustful of institutions – like the courts – that are critical to our civilized society.

The political action committee going after Judge Charles is made up of a handful of private attorneys who specialize in defending drunk drivers. They are targeting Judge Charles because of the very principles that make her an effective leader and a great judge. Rather than respecting Judge Charles' refusal to grant special privileges or bend the rules, these attorneys have decided to go on the attack by recruiting someone to run against her – a campaign they helped launch and continue to fund.

We are taking a stand against the so-called “Citizens for Judicial Excellence.” We call upon this group to cease all of its anonymous activities and expenditures in these judicial races. And we call upon Ed McKenna, Judge Charles’ opponent, to return all funds and other campaign support received from this special interest group.

We are taking this stand today because we believe our system of justice demands fairness and honesty in judicial elections. We can’t afford to allow any special interest group to hijack our justice system – and that’s exactly what these lawyers are trying to do. By going after Judge Charles, they are attacking a respected member of the court – someone with a distinguished record as a public servant and community leader – and setting a dangerous precedent that threatens the integrity of our entire justice system.

If we let this group succeed today, the message to every judge facing an election down the road will be unmistakable: *Either play the game our way, or you’ll be our next target.*

We cannot let that happen. Let’s protect the integrity of our profession and of our court system by sending a message to anyone attempting to buy judicial favor: *Our justice system is not for sale.*

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