Stalking Horse Judicial Candidates with Irish Surnames Attempt to Confuse Voters during Illinois St. Patrick’s Day Primary Election

For Immediate Release

Elmhurst, IL – Monday, March 9, 2020 - The Illinois Civil Justice League (ICJL) is warning voters to be wary of judicial candidates with Irish surnames who are otherwise unqualified for office. An analysis of candidates running in the March 17th Illinois Primary Election, which falls on St. Patrick’s Day, reveals two judicial candidates of Irish descent playing the role of a stalking horse, trying to siphon votes from other candidates.

“Candidates with Irish surnames have long had a political advantage in cities with large Irish-American populations like Chicago, Boston and New York. You don’t have to look further than names like Daley, Kennedy, and Moynihan to prove the point,” said John Pastuovic, president of the Illinois Civil Justice League. “While those running at the top of the ticket are usually established and well vetted, many running at the bottom of the ticket, particularly those running for judge, are unknown. It is in these campaigns for judge that political bosses or others attempt to use the anonymity of these bottom of the ticket races combined with a candidate’s Irish American heritage to game the system to either benefit or block another candidate,” he continued.

In an effort to better educate voters about choices for judge, the ICJL today released the ratings of judges running for election in the March 17 Primary Election. The ICJL retention recommendations are a part of the most complete and comprehensive voter education initiative of its kind, designed to assist voters in making informed decisions about the judicial candidates
on their ballot. The initiative called *Judges: Good and Bad-You Can’t Afford to be Indifferent* can be found at illinoisjudges.net.

During its analysis, the ICJL has revealed that a good number of judges have earned the voters’ trust and vote. “That good news, however, is mitigated by the fact that two judicial candidates appear to be stalking horse candidates, using their Irish surnames to siphon votes from other credible Irish-American candidates to benefit the candidacies of Cook County Democratic Party insiders,” Pastuovic stated.

Maureen O’Leary is running for the Neville Illinois Appellate Court vacancy against Cook County Circuit Court Judge Carolyn Gallagher and the Democratic Party chosen candidate Cook County Circuit Court Judge Michael Hyman. Circuit Court Judge Sandra Gisela Ramos is also in the race.

Bonnie McGrath is running for Mary Anne Mason’s Cook County Circuit Court vacancy against Jennifer Callahan and the Democratic Party chosen candidate Chris Stacey. Three other candidates are also in the race.

“The O’Leary and McGrath campaigns have much in common. Both used many of the same paid circulators to gather signatures for their nominating petitions and both have reported zero campaign expenditures or fundraising as of earlier this month. Additionally, news reports suggest that their opponents haven’t seen either O’Leary or McGrath at campaign events and neither has campaign websites,” Pastuovic said.

Judge Carolyn Gallagher recently said she sees Maureen O’Leary as a likely sham candidate given her Irish name, her complete lack of qualifications for appellate court, that she’s never attended any candidate functions and that she didn’t disclose payments for her 13,000-plus petition signatures.

“While the actions of Maureen O’Leary and Bonnie McGrath aren’t necessarily illegal, their actions are clearly unethical and for those reasons, both candidates are Not Recommended for Judge by the ICJL,” Pastuovic concluded.
Illinois Civil Justice League Judicial Ratings 2020 – Primary Election

The Illinois Civil Justice League (ICJL) invites judicial candidates and judges running for election in the Illinois primary election to be held on March 17, 2020, the opportunity to submit answers to seven questions in their own words, which the ICJL publishes on www.IllinoisJudges.net in an unedited form. In addition to providing this information to voters, the ICJL also evaluates the questionnaire answers, judicial and career records, press accounts, bar ratings, campaign contributions, and other sources. Candidates who submit a response to our questionnaire are considered for recommendations of Recommended or Highly Recommended. The rating of Highly Recommended is reserved for candidates or judges who have demonstrated a high level of competency in regards to their legal and/or judicial careers, or who have excelled in demonstrating their commitment and knowledge to educating the voters of their background, experience and viewpoints on the judicial system.

The ICJL reserves the right to take No Position on a candidate or judge who has returned our questionnaire. The rating of Not Recommended is reserved for candidates or judges who have campaigns or judicial records that have left the ICJL with questions about the integrity, impartiality, fairness, or conduct of the candidate, judge, or their campaign. The ICJL strictly does not factor partisanship into its ratings, but does research factors relating to external influences from special interests on the civil justice system.

For Supreme Court Judge

First District – Freeman Vacancy: P. Scott Neville (D) – Highly Recommended
First District – Karmeier Vacancy: David Overstreet (R) – Highly Recommended
Fifth District – Karmeier Vacancy: John Barberis (R) – Recommended

For Appellate Court Judge

First District – Neville Vacancy: Carolyn Gallagher (D) – Highly Recommended
First District – Neville Vacancy: Maureen O’Leary (D) – NOT Recommended
First District – Simon Vacancy: John Griffin (D) – Recommended
Fifth District – Chapman Vacancy: Mark Boie (R) – Highly Recommended
Fifth District – Chapman Vacancy: Sarah Smith (D) – Highly Recommended

For Cook County Circuit Judge

Coghlan Vacancy: Kelly McCarthy (D) – Recommended
Funderburk Vacancy: Daniel Collins (D) – Recommended
Mason Vacancy: Arthur Sutton (D) – NOT Recommended
Mason Vacancy: Bonnie McGrath (D) – NOT Recommended
Murphy Gorman Vacancy: Keely Hillison (D) – Highly Recommended
O’Brien Vacancy: Lloyd Brooks (D) – Highly Recommended
Roti Vacancy:  Lorraine Murphy (D) – Highly Recommended

**For Cook County Subcircuit Judge**

Additional Vacancy – 2nd Subcircuit:  Chelsey Robinson (D) – Highly Recommended
Additional Vacancy – 2nd Subcircuit:  Felicia Simmons-Stovall (D) – Recommended
Flynn Vacancy – 3rd Subcircuit:  Regina Mescall (D) – Highly Recommended
Jackson Vacancy – 7th Subcircuit:  Kristen Lyons (D) – Recommended
O’Brien Vacancy – 10th Subcircuit:  Daniel Trevino (D) – Highly Recommended
Kulys Hoffman Vacancy – 13th Subcircuit:  Gary Seyring (R) – Recommended
Bertucci Vacancy – 14th Subcircuit:  Gerardo Tristan, Jr. (D) – Recommended
Griffin Vacancy – 15th Subcircuit:  Nichole Patton (D) – Recommended

**For Downstate Circuit Judge**

2nd Circuit (Circuitwide):  Scott Quinn (R) – Highly Recommended
2nd Circuit (Circuitwide):  Matthew Hartrich (R) – Recommended
2nd Circuit (Richland County):  Chelsey Clark (R) – Recommended
3rd Circuit (Circuitwide):  Steve Stobbs (R) – Highly Recommended
3rd Circuit (Madison County):  Amy Maher (R) – Highly Recommended
11th Circuit (Circuitwide):  Jason Chambers (R) – Highly Recommended
18th Circuit (DuPage):  James McCluskey (R) – Highly Recommended
18th Circuit (DuPage County):  Richard Felice (R) – Highly Recommended
18th Circuit (DuPage County):  Rick Veenstra (R) – Highly Recommended
18th Circuit (DuPage County):  Azam Nizamuddin (D) – Recommended
18th Circuit (DuPage County):  Jill Otte (D) – Recommended

(Additional recommendations will be made in the general election and retention contests later in the year. Please visit [www.IllinoisJudges.net](http://www.IllinoisJudges.net) for more information.)