

Name: Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Candidate for: State Senate

Preferred Mailing Address:

Friends of Andrea Stewart-Cousins
P.O. Box 1107
Yonkers, NY 10702

Phone Number: (914) 375-7194

E-mail Address: andrea.stewart.cousins@gmail.com

Campaign Website: www.andrea2006.com

- 1. As you read in the cover letter to this survey, Legislative action is required to change the way we select Supreme Court justices, would you support a legislative effort to make such changes?**

YES

Comments

The state legislature should act immediately in accordance with the ruling of the federal courts. It is essential that New York make the judicial selection process open, fair and merit-based.

I think that the recent Second Circuit decision is an encouraging development. For too long, the judicial selection process has been conducted by insiders, behind closed doors, based on politics. Now that the federal courts have held that the system requires reform, we must work to establish a fair, open judicial selection process.

2. **Do you support holding public hearings to determine how to best amend our laws governing the selection of Supreme Court judicial candidates?**

YES

Comments

The public must have confidence in the judicial selection process. Holding public hearings and soliciting input from citizens will both assist the legislature in determining the most effective and equitable method of selecting judges and will help ensure that citizens' concerns regarding the process are addressed.

3. **The method of selecting judges in New York State has a direct and significant impact on the fair and efficient administration of justice. The Committee for Modern Courts believes that an appointive system represents the best method of limiting external pressures on judicial selection and diminishes the role of money and politics on the process. Would you favor replacing the present elective system for New York State Supreme Court justices with an appointive system in which a nonpartisan judicial qualification commission in each judicial district recommends well-qualified candidates?**

YES

Comments

I support the separation of the judicial selection process from the elected political process. Judicial selection should be made free from external pressures. The current role of money and politics in the process is inadvisable. The process must be reformed.

4. **Until the Legislature enacts new laws, Supreme Court judicial candidates will be selected at open primaries. The undue influence of campaign contributions on judicial candidates would be enhanced in an open primary system. Would you support legislation that provides for public financing of judicial campaigns?**

YES

Comments

The undue influence of campaign contributions has had a severe detrimental impact on elected politics. If judges are elected via open primaries, public financing would eliminate the potential for not only quid pro corruption, but also the appearance of corruption.

5. **The Feerick Commission recommended a series of reforms to the current elective system that might address the constitutional issues found by the Appeals Court in *Lopez Torres* (see cover letter). Included in the Feerick Commission recommendations, are reforms of the judicial nominating conventions. The reforms are designed to increase the participation and knowledge of delegates to the convention. They include:**

- **providing for the election of judicial delegates long before the conventions,**
- **decreasing the number of delegates,**
- **extending the term a delegate maintains his/her position,**
- **decreasing the petition signatures required for a delegate, and**
- **allowing judicial candidates to address the delegates at the convention.**

Would you support legislation that would include some or all of these recommendations?

YES

Comments

I believe that the state legislature must study the Feerick Commission's recommendations closely. In general, I think that the commission's work has been valuable in identifying defects in the judicial selection process and proposing potential solutions. The current judicial selection system is deeply flawed.

6. **Would you support another recommendation of the Feerick Commission: legislation establishing independent judicial qualifying commissions composed of appointees of local bar/civic, not for profit organizations, and law schools or local colleges or universities that would review judicial candidates and report its findings of "most qualified" directly to the delegates and the voters?**

YES

Comments

The current process does not adequately provide objective, merit-based analysis of judicial candidates to the public at large. Allowing non-political organizations to provide this information directly to delegates and voters would allow delegates and voters to draw their own independent conclusions concerning the qualifications of potential judges.

7. **Other elected judges in New York State include County Court, Surrogate Court, Family Court (outside of New York City), New York City Civil Court, District Court and City Court judges. Would you support the creation of independent judicial qualification commissions to review the qualifications of those judicial candidates?**

YES

Comments

I support measures designed to provide the public with an independent, non-partisan evaluation of the qualifications of judicial candidates.

8. **Please circle and comment on which of the following components of our court system are important to the members of your community.**

Jury Duty
Court Facilities
Judges
City Court
Family Court
Supreme Court
Village or Town Courts

Comments

Members of my community are concerned with each and all of these issues. I am committed to making the court system both more equitable and more efficient.