

BACKGROUND FACTS ON WILLIAM F. DOWNES

Professional Experience

- William Downes, a managing partner at Brown & Drew, a 17-lawyer firm in Casper, Wyoming, has an extensive practice in complex civil litigation.
- Mr. Downes's practice takes him regularly into both the state and federal courts, where he has earned accolades from both benches for his intellect, trial abilities, professionalism, and integrity.
- Mr. Downes has been active in local bar associations, including service on the Wyoming State Bar Association's Committee on Unauthorized Practice of Law from 1986 to the present, and as chair of its Continuing Legal Education Committee from 1986 to 1990. He also has served since 1991 on the Standing Committee on Local Rules for the District Court in Wyoming.
- Mr. Downes has long been active in the Casper community, and has served on the boards of the local Chamber of Commerce, Meals on Wheels, the City of Casper Housing Advisory Commission, the Central Wyoming Counseling Center, the St. Anthony's School Board, and the Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo. He has also been active in local Democratic Party activities, and is a member of the state Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.
- In 1991, Mr. Downes was instrumental in ending the differential treatment of women at the Casper Country Club. The club, which had not granted women voting rights and had restricted tee times for women, was challenged by some of its members. Mr. Downes successfully negotiated the settlement -- which rectified this discrimination -- between the club's lawyers and the plaintiffs' lawyers.
- The ABA has rated Mr. Downes as "well-qualified."

Reproductive Rights

- William Downes is committed to upholding the constitutional rights of all citizens as embodied in the Constitution and enunciated by the Supreme Court, and more specifically to adhering faithfully to the privacy interests protected by Griswold, Roe, and Casey.
- Mr. Downes's candidacy for the bench has received the enthusiastic support of Wyoming's Governor, Mike Sullivan, and its Secretary of State, Kathy Karpan, as well as that of many other prominent women and pro-choice advocates in the community:
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- Mr. Downes enjoys the unqualified support of a great many avowedly pro-choice citizens of Wyoming, who speak from personal knowledge of his dedication to the principles of law and the protection of individual rights and liberties.

- Contrary to some press reports, Mr. Downes has never questioned the right of a woman, under the Supreme Court's constitutional jurisprudence, to make her own reproductive choices, including the decision to have an abortion.

Allegations

- A few members of the Democratic Party in Wyoming have reported that William Downes referred to pro-choice advocates at the 1988 Wyoming Democratic Convention as "bra burners." Mr. Downes, acknowledging that tensions and tempers were running high at the meeting, has responded in all candor: His memory of the meeting is simply not full enough for him to categorically deny having made such a comment, but it certainly would not accord with his view of women generally or his normal language in conversation. (See attached letter.)

- An isolated report from the convention suggests that Mr. Downes actually declared that the pro-choice position was "morally" suspect or repugnant. This is untrue, and the actual story is as follows: Late in the process of constructing a platform, some delegates proposed a plank affirmatively supporting abortion rights. Mr. Downes and others, recognizing that many Democrats in Wyoming would not support such a plank, objected to the attempt to include it at the last minute because it would be an unnecessarily divisive force in the party. Mr. Downes did not support an anti-abortion rights plank; he advocated that the party not endorse any position. As the discussion became heated, he objected strongly to the tactics of those advocating the inclusion of a plank, saying that they were acting in an insupportable manner in trying to strong-arm other delegates into including a provision that would create dissension in the party. He has since been cited, inaccurately and out of context, as objecting to the substance of the plank, rather than the tactics of the plank's proponents.