

Tennesseans vote to retain state Supreme Court justices

ABOTA chapters rally to defend justices of unfair criticism

Preserving the quality and independence of the judiciary has been a hallmark of ABOTA's efforts over the years. Thanks to the efforts of the Tennessee Chapter, voters on Aug. 7, 2014, retained all three Tennessee Supreme Court justices in retention elections.

Chief Justice Gary Wade and Justices Connie Clark and Sharon Lee survived to win new eight-year terms on the state's highest court.

"The justices were able to overcome a vigorous opposition campaign by a well-funded group who wrongfully accused them," said Dulin Kelly, Tennessee Chapter Past President and National Board Member.

He added that the judicial system has been preserved thanks to the support of Tennessee Chapter as well as the support of members from Iowa, Florida and Oklahoma, states that recently experienced similar issues.

ABOTA supports public confidence in the judiciary by responding to adverse publicity, misinformation, or unwarranted criticism of an individual judge or the judiciary. When similar retention efforts in Iowa and other states have gone unchecked, the results have been that justices subject to removal for political gain, not for performance.

"This sends a message that "justice is not for sale in Tennessee," Kelly said. The replacement campaign was spearheaded by the Tennessee Forum, a group that received funding from the Tennessee governor's political action committee. It was supplemented by outside conservative groups.

— Source: ABOTA President's Report, 2014