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THE GRAND RAPIDS BAR ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES THE EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE KENT COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT AND KENTWOOD'S DISTRICT COURT JUDGE RACES

GRAND RAPIDS, MI - The Grand Rapids Bar Association ("GRBA") has completed its review process concerning the contested judicial race for the Kent County Circuit Court Race and Kentwood's 62B District Court Race, on the November 3, 2020 General Election ballot.¹

In this election, the voters will elect candidates to fill two (2) vacant Circuit Court seats, identified on the ballot as "Non-Incumbent." Four candidates will appear on the ballot: Maureen Gottlieb, Jenny Johnsen Sarber, Scott Noto and Stephen Willison.

Kentwood residents will also elect one person to fill the single 62B District Court position (identified on the ballot as "Non-Incumbent"). Two candidates will appear on that ballot: Joe Jackson and Amanda Sterkenburg.

A committee of 14 Bar Association members – the Judicial Candidate Review Committee –evaluated all six of the candidates. The Bar Association's Bylaws define the Committee's responsibilities, the scope of its inquiry and dictate how the Committee should carry out those delegated responsibilities. As part of its review process, the Committee evaluated each of the candidates' legal ability including scholarship, analysis, judgment and clarity of thought and expression; trial experience; integrity; judicial temperament including being open-minded, even-tempered, fair and impartial; health; communication skills; ethical standards and several other relevant factors in pursuing and completing that task.

Each candidate was given the opportunity to respond to an extensive questionnaire seeking pertinent information regarding the candidate's background and experience. Responses received by the Committee were reviewed by the Committee as a whole. The Committee also conducted interviews of local members of the profession (area judges and attorneys), performed background checks of the candidates and conducted a personal interview of each candidate. Based on all the information disclosed or discovered concerning the candidates, the Committee assessed their overall qualifications for the judicial office they seek.

There are six potential ratings: (i) exceptionally well qualified; (ii) well qualified; (iii) qualified; (iv) not qualified; (v) no rating for failure to participate in the process; and (vi) not qualified for lack of experience. The ratings are defined in the Bylaws. Further, the Bylaws give the Committee discretion to rate a candidate even if he or she chooses not to participate in the process.

Judicial Candidate Review Committee Chairperson, Bruce A. Courtade, announced the GRBA's candidate ratings today. The candidates were evaluated as follows:

¹ In addition to the two contested Circuit Court races on the November Ballot to fill seats being vacated by current Circuit Court Judges, a third name, Hon. Kathleen Feeney, will appear on the ballot with a status of "Incumbent" and will be listed separately as the sole candidate for one open position.

**Kent County Circuit Court -
Voter to Select TWO out of FOUR**

Maureen Gottlieb	Well Qualified
Jenny Johnsen Sarber	Well Qualified
Scott Noto	Qualified
Stephen Willison	Qualified

**Kent DISTRICT Court -
Voter to Select ONE out of TWO**

Joe Jackson	Qualified
Amanda Sterkenburg	Not Qualified

A copy of the applicable Committee Bylaws may be accessed by clicking [here](#).

The Judicial Review Process does not constitute an endorsement of any candidate by the Grand Rapids Bar Association or its Judicial Candidate Review Committee, nor is the evaluation a reflection of any candidate's abilities as an attorney. Rather, it is an overall evaluation of each candidate's qualifications for the judicial office he or she is seeking at the time of the evaluation.