



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 11, 2015

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REP. HEBL CIRCULATES IMPARTIAL JUSTICE ACT

Legislation Would Reinstate Public Financing Mechanism for Wisconsin Supreme Court Elections

(MADISON) - Representative Gary Hebl (D- Sun Prairie) circulated legislation today that would reinstate the public funding mechanism for Wisconsin Supreme Court elections. This public funding mechanism was eliminated in the 2011-2013 budget.

Hebl pointed to the state's most recent high court election as an example of why the legislature should reinstate public funding for Supreme Court races.

"This election year, we witnessed two Supreme Court candidates spend more than \$1 million in campaign ads – money the judicial candidates raised by appealing directly to high-dollar donors," Hebl said. "Our current campaign finance process for Supreme Court races is a formula for discord on the court. Look no further than the most recent election – where a sitting justice actually donated \$500 to his colleague's opponent – as proof that the system we have now will only continue to cause friction on our state's highest court."

Hebl said the Impartial Justice Act will provide Wisconsin with a more effective court because candidates would not have to rely on high-dollar political donors who seek to gain influence with the court.

"Many recent state Supreme Court races have been marred by out-of-control campaign spending that only serves to mislead voters with political attacks on the other candidate, doing nothing to inform the public about the relevant qualifications of Supreme Court candidates," said Hebl. "We should not have a judicial election system that requires candidates to raise large amounts of money from special interest groups and wealthy individuals in order to win office. The Impartial Justice Act will help ensure that our highest court cannot be bought and avoid the perception that sitting Supreme Court justices' decisions are influenced by campaign contributions."

The Impartial Justice Act:

- Provides a qualified state Supreme Court candidate who accepts public financing \$100,000 in the spring primary and \$300,000 in the spring election.
- Restores the original \$1000 cap on individual and political committee donations to Supreme Court candidates that were increased to \$10,000 and \$8,625 respectively in the 2011-2013 budget.
- Creates an income tax check off of \$2, which does not increase or decrease an individual's tax liability. It simply directs \$2 of general purpose revenue to be transferred to the Democracy Trust Fund.

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