



For Immediate release

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**Justice for Washington releases evaluations of Justice Richard Sanders and
Supreme Court candidate Charlie Wiggin.**

TACOMA, WA -- The Justice for Washington Foundation released its ratings for both candidates in Washington State's single contested Supreme Court election. The Foundation opted to offer a comprehensive descriptive evaluation of Justice Richard Sanders and challenger Charlie Wiggins in an effort to improve the information available to voters.

Foundation President Alex Hays explained the new methodology used in the Sanders-Wiggins race, "Normally the Foundation would rate each candidate on their qualifications to serve on the court and their judicial philosophy, such as when we rated Justice Jim Johnson "Exceptionally Well Qualified" and described his judicial philosophy as showing "...admirable deference to law and Constitution". In the case of Sanders and Wiggins we believe that this system does not provide enough depth to help voters as they choose between the two candidates."

The descriptions evaluations are the product of Washington State's only bi-partisan judicial evaluation process. The Foundation's Candidate Evaluation Committee is co-chaired by Republican Chris Bayley and Democrat Jerry Rubin.

The Justice for Washington Foundation was formed to educate the public about the history and content of the Washington State Constitution and promote a well qualified elected judiciary. The Foundation is chaired by former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton.

The descriptive evaluations are attached to this release.

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Justice Richard Sanders

Justice Sanders is unique on the Washington State Supreme Court; he has authored a record number of dissents, nearly all of which are critical of the authority of state government. Sanders is one of the just two Justices who joined the court by unseating a sitting Justice. His legal writings are clear and among the most accessible to the lay reader.

Sanders' career has also been marked by controversy and his opponent has based much of his campaign on criticizing Sanders' dissents and ethics. Most recently, Sanders authored an opinion defending Washington State's open government provisions that also served to increase the size of a cash award in a case he himself had before a Superior Court. While at the national conference of the Federalist Society, Justice Sanders shouted "tyrant" during a presentation by U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey. The Foundation is deeply troubled by both of these incidents.

Despite having served for well over a decade on the state Supreme Court, Justice Sanders remains an outsider in Washington State politics. Where other members of the court appear to be too deferential to the will of the establishment, Sanders has no trouble upsetting the state's most powerful interest groups. He was the fifth and deciding vote to uphold Washington's "Defense of Marriage Act", supports property rights and free speech rights. His dissents are largely in criminal cases where he sides with defendants and he has earned the strong opposition of prosecutors and law enforcement.

Sanders has a unique judicial philosophy, simultaneously limiting state power (particularly in criminal and regulatory cases) while expanding the authority of the judiciary.

Sanders has the support of many key trial lawyers (based on his generally favorable treatment of their industry), property rights organizations, traditional values groups and the State Republican Party.

Charlie Wiggins

Charlie Wiggins is a respected appellate attorney who is clearly a member of Washington State's Democratic establishment. Previously appointed to the Court of Appeals by Democratic Governor Mike Lowry, Wiggins was subsequently defeated in his unexpired term election.

Early in Wiggins' legal career he decided to focus on appeals work and has argued before the Washington State Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals frequently for diverse clients – although most often representing plaintiffs. His appellate work has earned him the support of key trial lawyers, effectively dividing this powerful and well-monied constituency.

Wiggins opposes judicial elections and would replace Washington's popular elections with an appointment made by the Governor, based on input from a commission of legal insiders. Wiggins also was the leading voice for a strict recusal rule for judges.

Wiggins is a solid legal mind and an effective writer. If elected he would become one of the courts more competent justices. He embraces the language of judicial restraint, but otherwise appears to have no discernible judicial philosophy. During his brief time of the Court of Appeals he applied the law as he found it, but most establishment figures become more politicized when they join the state Supreme Court. The Foundation is concerned that Wiggins' relationships with the political establishment will harm his objectivity.

Wiggins has the support of most of the state's Democratic political establishment and almost uniform support from Washington's many left leaning organizations. He has more judicial endorsers than the typical challenger.