



April 21, 2010

Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

Dear Representative:

We write today in support of House File 224, the Impartial Judiciary Bill and urge your support of this important reform legislation.

The Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, meeting as the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, and as a sponsoring organization of the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC), in 2008 approved the JRLC policy paper entitled "Selecting Impartial Judges in Minnesota". This paper called for a constitutional amendment to the Minnesota Constitution to institute a public evaluation and retention election system in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court *White* decisions.

Access to a fair and impartial judiciary is a cornerstone of a just society. Fair access to courts without regard to economic or social standing is necessary to safeguard freedom and human rights. Every citizen deserves, when needed, access to a fair court system and a hearing before an impartial judge.

We believe that amending the state's constitution is necessary to keep our judiciary free of partisanship, special-interest financing, and to preserve the very high confidence that Minnesotans currently have in our judges and courts.

We agree with the judgment of our nation's founders that voters should have an indirect role in forming the judiciary. Public accountability is served by electing the Governor who makes initial selections for district and state appellate court vacancies based on merit and, then, by citizens voting whether to retain judges at the end their terms. A public evaluation system is also an important part of the electorate's participation.

We join many others in support of Representative Steve Simon's bill, HF224, and urge you to vote to put this constitutional reform on the ballot for voters this November.

Sincerely,

Chris Leifeld
Executive Director