



The
Hamilton Consulting Group
Legislative, Regulatory & Information Services

2003 Supreme Court Candidates

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The Third Branch - An Important Election

With all of the fanfare surrounding a new Administration, a new Legislature with new leadership, and a huge budget deficit, there is a tendency to overlook the extremely important election to our state's highest court. This year there are three candidates vying for a spot being vacated by Justice William Bablitch who is not seeking re-election. Justice Bablitch will have served 20 years on the Wisconsin Supreme Court when his term expires on August 1, 2003. Those candidates seeking his seat are Ed Brunner, Paul Higginbotham and Patience Roggensack. Information about the three candidates is listed below along with links to their respective web sites.

Judicial elections in Wisconsin are "non-partisan" elections and, as such, are held during the "Spring Election" along with other non-partisan elections, including most local races. The 2003 Spring Primary will be held on February 18, with the General Election scheduled for April 1. Members of the State Supreme Court are elected for ten-year terms and no two terms can expire in the same year. There are seven members on the Wisconsin Supreme Court. The Court is the final authority on matters pertaining to the Wisconsin Constitution and the highest tribunal for all actions begun in the state, except those involving federal issues appealable to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Candidates for the Supreme Court are somewhat restricted in how their elections can be conducted due to the ethical constraints of not being able to discuss the merits or demerits of specific cases or issues that may later come before the court. Candidates can comment on cases that have been decided, which can draw a fine line regarding related issues that may surface later. For the most part, supreme court candidates tout their experience, abilities and judicial philosophy. When the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are used in relation to court candidates, they are not intended to connote political philosophy as much as an approach to deciding questions of law based on the Constitution or precedent. "Liberals" tend to view the Constitution and precedent as "fluid" while "conservatives" are more likely to be considered "strict constructionists."

The following information is presented in an effort to provide some basic comparative background information on the three candidates. All candidates have listed substantial community involvement. We have included only professionally related positions. We urge you to check their respective websites and public statements for additional information.

Ed Brunner (www.brunnerforjustice.org)

- Barron County Circuit Court Judge - 1988-present
- Chief Judge, 10th Judicial District
- Age 54
- B.A., 1970, Marquette University
- Juris Doctor, 1974, University of Akron
- Previous professional experience - County Corporation Counsel, City Attorney, Private Law Practice
- Prominent Support/Endorsements: Former Governor Tony Earl; U.S. Representatives Ron Kind and Dave Obey; Former Supreme Court Justice Don Steinmetz; Former Superintendents of Public Instruction John Benson and Bert Grover

Paul Higginbotham (www.higginbotham2003.org)

- Dane County Circuit Court Judge -- 1994-present
- Madison Municipal Judge -- 1992-94
- Age 48
- B.A., 1981, UW-Madison
- Juris Doctor, 1985, UW-Madison
- Previous professional experience -- Staff Attorney for Milwaukee Fair Housing Council and Milwaukee Legal Aid, Private Law Practice
- Prominent Support/Endorsements: Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton; Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk; Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Heffernan; Madison Mayor Sue Bauman; Alliant Energy CEO Erroll Davis

Patience Roggensack (www.roggensack2003.com)

- Wisconsin Court of Appeals Judge, District IV -- 1996-present
- Age 62
- B.A., 1962, Drake University
- Juris Doctor, 1980, UW Law School
- Previous professional experience -- Private Law Practice
- Prominent Support/Endorsements: H&SS Secretary and former Governor Tommy Thompson; U.S. Representatives Mark Green, Paul Ryan and Tom Petri and former U.S. Rep. Scott Klug; Former Supreme Court Justices Louis Ceci and William Callow; UW President Kathryn Lyall

To receive further information on these or other political/policy issues in Wisconsin, contact a Hamilton Consulting Group lobbyist at (608) 258-9506, or email:

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