



# Judicial Campaign Watch

Wisconsin  
Judicial Campaign  
Integrity Committee

## ***Statement of the Wisconsin Judicial Campaign Integrity Committee***

December 18, 2007

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### **Chair**

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The Wisconsin Judicial Campaign Integrity Committee has conferred in response to concerns raised by One Wisconsin Now regarding campaign materials created by the campaign of Judge Michael Gableman, a candidate running for election to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. One Wisconsin Now questions whether campaign materials produced by the Gableman campaign violate Supreme Court Rule 60.06(3)(b), which prohibits certain promises and commitments by candidates for judicial office.

While the Committee has determined that no formal action is required, it reminds voters (as well as candidates and their supporters) that judges are not elected to “represent” the interests of any specific group or political agenda, as is commonly expected of candidates for non-judicial office. Rather, their role is to administer justice in a fair and impartial manner; to be arbiters of conflict, not spokespersons or representatives for various parties to a legal proceeding, such as law enforcement, prosecutors or defendants in criminal proceedings. This is more than an abstract goal because no citizen of Wisconsin should ever appear before a judge who has already decided a case before hearing about the facts and applicable law. To phrase it in the vernacular, judges and justices are expected to be referees who call the “balls and strikes” as the law and the facts of a case require; they are not expected to express bias for or against one party or another.

Candidates and their supporters have a First Amendment right to participate in a meaningful and substantive campaign that promotes voter interest and support. But voters are urged to review all campaign statements, especially those that attempt to characterize the positions of opponents, with a skeptical eye. Advertisements that state or imply that a candidate has been or will be biased in favor of a particular party to the legal system undermine public trust and confidence in a fair and impartial judiciary. Such advertisements do nothing to elevate the tenor of judicial campaigns.

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