



Supreme Court of Illinois

June 14, 2019

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE ANNE M. BURKE STATEMENT ON 7th SUBCIRCUIT VACANCY

Justice Anne M. Burke issued this amended statement on the 7th Subcircuit vacancy in Cook County (amended items noted below):

“The Illinois Supreme Court is committed to appointing the highest qualified individuals to circuit court vacancies. This power is vested through the Illinois Constitution and is a responsibility that we take very seriously.

On Oct, 29, 2018, Ald. Jason Ervin came to my office and asked me to appoint Pamela Reaves-Harris to an upcoming 7th Subcircuit vacancy. I let Ald. Ervin know that Ms. Reaves-Harris was welcome to apply and that she would need to be reviewed by my Judicial Selection Committee.

The appointment process is a fair and open system. The process begins with the posting of a Notice of Vacancy on the Supreme Court’s website seeking applicants. Applicants submit their materials to the Chair of my Judicial Selection Committee, Kevin Forde. The Selection Committee first checks the bar association evaluations of each candidate. Candidates that have passed the bar association evaluations are then screened by the Committee. The Committee then interviews candidates and makes recommendations to me. Thereafter, I interview the qualified candidates. Once I make a selection, I nominate the qualified candidate to the full Supreme Court. Each member of the Supreme Court then submits a vote on the candidate.

In February of this year a Notice of Vacancy was posted on the Supreme Court’s website and a Press Release was issued announcing the 7th Subcircuit vacancy and that applicants were being sought. Pamela Reaves-Harris submitted an application which included an evaluation by The Chicago Bar Association Judicial Evaluation Committee. The evaluation, executed by then President Patricia Brown Holmes, found Ms. Reaves- Harris to be “Not Recommended” for the office of Circuit Court Judge and stated, in part, that while Ms. Harris was “a dedicated, busy and hardworking public servant,” her “limited practice and court experience would make it difficult for her to effectively serve as a Circuit Court Judge.” My Judicial Selection Committee similarly concluded that Ms. Reaves-Harris was not a qualified candidate. Cara LeFevour Smith was found “Qualified” by the Chicago Bar Association and “Highly Qualified” by my Judicial Screening Committee. Six Supreme Court Justices voted to appoint Cara LeFevour Smith to the 7th Judicial Cook County Subcircuit. Justice P. Scott Neville did not participate.

Having qualified judges is in the best interests of public safety and promotes confidence in the justice system.”

Please Note: This version amends the June 13 statement to clarify that Justice P. Scott Neville did not participate in the vote on Cara LeFevour Smith and that she was found “Qualified” by the Chicago Bar Association.

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