



NEWS RELEASE of the AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 26, 2006

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Steve Leben
President, American Judges Association
Kansas (State) District Judge
(913) 485-7192

AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION DECLARES ITS OPPOSITION TO COLORADO PROPOSED AMENDMENT 40

WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA—The American Judges Association today announced its opposition to a proposed Colorado constitutional amendment limiting the terms of appellate judges.

The American Judges Association is the largest independent association of trial and appellate judges in the United States, with about 2,000 members, including 20 in Colorado. The American Judges Association was founded in 1959 at a meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and incorporated in Colorado in 1960 as the National Association of Municipal Judges. It later expanded to include judges of all types and is now headquartered in Williamsburg, Virginia.

“Under our system of government, the executive and legislative branches are political. If the third branch—the judiciary—is not kept out of the political fray, it cannot do its job of providing a check and balance on the other branches,” said Steve Leben, president of the American Judges Association and a trial judge in Kansas.

“The judiciary relies upon the wisdom, experience, and maturity of its judges as the source of its strength in defending constitutional rights against attack by the politically elected executive and legislative branches. Judges must be accountable to the Constitution and the law, not to politicians or temporary moves in public opinion. Removing the most experienced appellate judges would be unwise and unnecessary,” Leben said. “The decisions made by the Colorado Supreme Court call for ample doses of wisdom, maturity, and experience.”

Andrew Armatas, a member of the American Judges Association and presiding judge of the Denver County Court, Colorado’s largest county court bench, emphasized

that Colorado's existing system for choosing and evaluating judges had been carefully designed to keep politics out of the process.

"We have had a judge merit-selection process in effect for 40 years, which has enabled the voters during each election cycle to comment on the performance of a judge and to vote to retain or not to retain a judge. The merit-selection process was put in place in an attempt to take politics out of the equation. If Amendment 40 is passed, it could bring us back to old-time politics. Any sitting governor may pack the courts with judges of his political persuasion. I strongly urge the voters to keep in mind that an independent judiciary is a keystone of our democracy," Armatas said. "Vote no on 40."

The American Judges Association's nine-member executive committee today adopted a formal position paper opposing Amendment 40. The full paper is posted on the American Judges Association website at <http://aja.ncsc.dni.us>.

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