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KANSANS REACT TO BROWNBACK POLITICAL APPOINTEE FOR COURT OF APPEALS

TOPEKA — Today, Kansans for Fair Courts responded to the announcement that Governor Brownback had selected Administration attorney Caleb Stegall as his political appointment to the Kansas Court of Appeals.

“In one stunning announcement today, Governor Brownback has made it crystal clear what has been behind his plan to junk the merit system for Kansas Court of Appeals appointments all along. He threw out the old system and hand-picked a buddy for the job,” said executive director Ryan Wright. “Many suspected this would happen as far back as July, when ‘highly placed sources’ within the Administration said in press reports that Mr. Stegall was the choice. Now we know the job was his from the start. In a word, this kind of brazenness is breathtaking.”

Yesterday, Brownback made public that “18 people expressed enough interest in the job to fill out at least some portion of the application, 13 were interviewed by staff and three were referred to him for a choice.” Brownback has refused to release the names of the 13 applicants who were interviewed by his staff. Additionally, he has refused to name what staff members were involved in the process.

In 2012, Stegall applied for a vacancy on the Kansas Court of Appeals but did not make it through the competitive merit selection process that, at the time, was overseen by the Kansas Supreme Court Nominating Commission. This year, the Legislature—at the urging of Governor Brownback—changed the selection process to the political model that gave Brownback sole authority in selecting the nominee.

Wright went on to say, “The appointment of Mr. Stegall raises more questions than answers. For starters, were the other 13 applicants given proper consideration? What role did Mr. Stegall play in the selection process? Kansans have been asked to trust that Governor Brownback has made the right choice and selected the most qualified applicant to the court. However, trust is something that you earn and these political games that Governor Brownback continues to play make earning that trust very difficult.”

For more information about merit selection and the overall judicial issue, please visit www.KansansForFairCourts.org. Kansans for Fair Courts is an initiative of the Kansas Values Institute.

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