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CONTACT
Ryan Wright
785.379.3520
ryan@kansasvaluesinstitute.org

KANSANS FOR FAIR COURTS REACT TO BROWNBACK ADMISSION OF NOT USING CRITERIA FOR SELECTING JUDICIAL NOMINEE

TOPEKA — Today, Kansans for Fair Courts released a recording of comments made by Governor Sam Brownback during a recent speech at the Kansas City chapter of the Federalist Society and responded to Brownback's admission that he did not use any criteria for vetting candidates when he appointed administration attorney Caleb Stegall to the Kansas Court of Appeals.

"Governor Brownback finally admitted what was clear all along: there were no selection criteria for his Court of Appeals appointment," said executive director Ryan Wright. "This is the first time he has been honest with Kansans on this issue. For months, the administration has been saying that their nominee was among the most thoroughly vetted choices for the court, but it is clear now that they did not have any criteria for measuring the applicants' qualifications."

Brownback made the following comments [19:41 mark] during the Federalist Society speech:

Question: "Did you have a set that you didn't announce? Did you have criteria that you were using?"

Brownback: "No."

Following his 'no' answer, Brownback went on to talk about his time as a U.S. Senator, but failed to provide any additional insight on what, measurable legal criteria was used or how applicants – not employed as a member of his staff – could position themselves for consideration in future judicial vacancies.

Wright went on to say, "We are nominating individuals to the second highest court in the state; we need qualified judges that understand the law and have a professional body of work that is beyond reproach. Governor Brownback has done a huge disservice to the 13 Kansans that applied for the Court of Appeals, and it sends a chilling message moving forward for future vacancies. Kansans deserve courts that will protect and defend the Constitution and will serve as a check on the other branches of government. Merit selection is the only way to ensure that we get highly qualified judges who are accountable to the law and not to politicians."

Administration attorney Caleb Stegall was nominated by Brownback and confirmed by the Kansas Senate during the Legislature's Special Session. 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.

To listen to the full speech, please visit: <http://youtu.be/m88I8NhM6VI?t=18m36s>. And, 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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