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CONTACT

Ryan Wright

785.379.3520

ryan@kansasvaluesinstitute.org

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION SETS RECORD STRAIGHT ON JUDICIAL SELECTION; REJECTS BROWNBACK'S CLAIMS, MISCHARACTERIZATION

TOPEKA — Today, the Kansas Values Institute applauded American Bar Association President Laurel Bellows for clarifying the ABA's position on merit selection and refuting Governor Brownback's claims of support for his secretive, political model for selecting judges to the Kansas Court of Appeals.

"Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts," said executive director Ryan Wright. "Once again, Governor Brownback has attempted to bend the facts to fit into his reality. But, you can only bend the truth so far before it breaks. Kansans should be able to trust their governor, regardless of policy differences, but Governor Brownback continues to violate this trust in his rush to remake the courts in his own image."

On July 11, Governor Brownback issued a press release claiming that the ABA supports his position of not releasing names of applicants to the Court of Appeals saying, "It is clear that disclosing the names of potential nominees would hurt applicant pools for future selections and this is why the American Bar Association recommends this method of selection and why the federal judicial selection process follows this same path."

Today, ABA President Bellows released the following statement to the Kansas City Star clarifying their position and explaining why the Brownback-model is not similar to the federal model:

"Although the ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary conducts reviews of potential nominees confidentially, that function is not analogous to the governor's. The committee provides the president [of the United States] with an objective, nonpartisan peer evaluation of a potential nominee in confidence; it plays no role in the selection of candidates or nominees.

The ABA emphatically does not recommend Kansas' new method of judicial selection for circuit court judges. In fact, it opposes that method, which eliminates the independent nominating commission and confers complete control over the judicial selection process on the governor and senate.

We believe this approach invites partisan politics instead of merit-based review of a potential judge's qualifications."

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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