



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 4, 2013

CONTACT
Ryan Wright
785.379.3520
ryan@kansasvaluesinstitute.org

KANSANS RESPOND TO KANSAS SENATE'S RUBBERSTAMP OF APPEALS COURT NOMINEE; SEN. HENSLEY ANNOUNCEMENT

TOPEKA — Kansans for Fair Courts responded to today's confirmation of Governor Sam Brownback's chief legal counsel, Caleb Stegall by the Kansas Senate. Stegall was nominated by Governor Sam Brownback to fill the 14th position on the Kansas Court of Appeals and is the first nominee to be confirmed under the new, political system for selecting judges.

"We were promised an open, transparent and through vetting of Governor Brownback's nominee for the Kansas Court of Appeals," said executive director Ryan Wright. "What Kansans got was nothing more than a bit of political theatre and a bill for \$80,000. Governor Brownback, in his quest to pack the court with his friends, has taken an important element of our democracy—free and fair courts—and turned it into something that can be auctioned off to the highest bidder or political crony."

The Senate voted 32 to eight, to confirm Stegall. 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 and now-Judge Stegall—changed the selection process to the political model that gave Brownback sole authority in selecting the nominee.

Wright went on to say, "Governor Brownback gamed the system to his benefit, but the secret is out and thousands of Kansans have taken note. Our concerns have never been about one person, but about the lack of accountability, fairness and transparency in this new process. Our state deserves a process that is worthy of our court system, the judges that administer the law, and the citizens who count on free and fair courts, not a legislative rubberstamp for Brownback's political picks."

During the debate on the floor of the Kansas Senate, Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley announced that he will pre-file a bill for the 2014 Legislative Session that would require the governor to make public the names of judicial applicants.

"We applaud Senator Anthony Hensley for siding with the 71 percent of Kansans that are demanding the names of judicial applicants be made public, in order to ensure an open and transparent nominating process," said Wright. "Lawmakers should never feel that hiding things from the public is an acceptable course of action. Kansans have known the names of applicants since 1981, and we need to return to that process so that taxpayers are never again left questioning the qualifications of a judicial nominee."

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.

#