



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1141

Resolution calling on the parties designated by the New York State Board of Elections in the City of New York and holding a place on a judicial election ballot to create independent and diverse judicial screening panels that provide a meaningful evaluation process for the selection of judicial candidates.

By Council Members Yassky, Fidler, Koppell, Avella and Felder

Whereas, The judiciary has the vital function of providing the citizens of the State of New York with unbiased and independent adjudication and resolution of civil and criminal matters; and

Whereas, Only certain judicial positions are appointed by the Mayor, while other judges on the Surrogate, Civil, and Supreme Court are elected by the voters of New York; and

Whereas, There have been recent allegations as to the dominant role of the political parties in the selection of judicial candidates; and Whereas, The present state of judicial elections in New York has become such that in April 2003, Court of Appeals Chief Justice Judith Kaye created The New York State Commission to Promote Public Confidence in Judicial Elections to examine the issues surrounding candidate selection, campaign finance, and voter education; and

Whereas, Improving the independence of the judiciary, and increasing the public confidence in judicial elections are policies promoted by the American Bar Association, the New York State Bar Association, and the New York County Lawyers Association;

Whereas, In an effort to reduce the involvement of political agendas and the role of the political parties in Manhattan, New York County has for many years enlisted the aid of an independent screening panel comprised of delegates from independent associations, organizations, and advocacy groups; and

Whereas, Other counties, including Kings County in September 2003, have created panels to review judicial candidates, but these panels have been selected by political party leadership and therefore only vaguely give the illusion of political independence; and

Whereas, In order to truly have an independent and diverse group of judges in the State of New York, viable candidates in each county should uniformly be reviewed and selected by independent panels such as have been created in New York County; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the parties designated by the New York State Board of Elections in the City of New York and holding a place on a judicial election ballot to create independent and diverse judicial screening panels that provide a meaningful evaluation process for the selection of judicial candidates.

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