



## Statement of 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court

The Kansas City Star's November 1, 2020 editorial recommending removal of three judges from their positions on the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit is riddled with factual inaccuracies and willful misstatements and should be rejected by voters as yet another attempt to politicize the process of selecting and retaining members of our judiciary who have devoted their professional lives to public service. The judges in question have served a cumulative 38 years as judicial officers. Never once has their impartiality or judicial ability been questioned – never once have they been opposed for retention.

Among the more striking omissions from the editorial is the fact that the Missouri Court of Appeals ultimately **upheld** the Court's decisions regarding the Public Defender caseload issues first presented to Judges Torrence and Campbell. Voters can read the Court's decision here: <https://www.courts.mo.gov/fv/s/fileviewer.do?courtCode=1W&ci=WD82962&di=334973&so=D>

In addition to being based on misstatements and half-truths, the Star's recommendations ignore a judge's most fundamental obligation – to decide cases on the basis of the law and the facts presented to them. Providing adequate funding and other resources for the Public Defender system and making changes to the landlord tenant laws are issues for the legislative and executive branches of our government – branches that have the ability to make and carry out policy by enacting legislation and issuing executive orders. Judges do not have this power but are instead obligated to decide cases and make decisions based on the law and facts as they are – not as the judge may wish them to be. The Star's editorial ignores this fundamental principle and asks voters to do the same thing.

Voters wanting information regarding these and other judges on the ballot would be better off going to [www.yourmissourijudges.org](http://www.yourmissourijudges.org) and reviewing the extensive work of the Missouri Judicial Performance Review Committee which, by Supreme Court rule, is responsible for conducting evaluations of trial and appellate judges who are on the ballot for retention. This committee is made up of lawyers, retired judges, and members of our community from across the state, including physicians, teachers, and religious leaders. At [www.yourmissourijudges.org](http://www.yourmissourijudges.org), voters can learn about the exhaustive process of evaluating judges who are on the ballot Tuesday, and can review lawyer and juror surveys regarding them and read decisions they have written. Voters who review the records of Judges Torrence, Campbell and Rodecap will see that all 3 judges are overwhelmingly viewed as conscientious, diligent, unbiased and **fair**. Voters will also see that jurors who served on juries of the two judges who preside over such cases were asked whether those judges "treat people equally, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, [or] economic status," whether they appeared "free from bias," and whether they "promote public confidence in the courts." Those jurors unanimously responded "yes" to all these questions.

Voters have many important decisions to make on Tuesday. They deserve the chance to make those decisions based on facts, and on the full record of the public servants on the ballot. It is unfortunate that voters were not able to rely on the Star to provide this. Luckily, there are other places voters can go to get it.

###