



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2013

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FORMER LEGISLATORS DEMAND TRANSPARENCY IN JUDICIAL NOMINATING PROCESS, ASK BROWBACK TO RELEASE NAMES AND COME CLEAN

TOPEKA—Today, over 55 former legislators from across Kansas have called on Governor Sam Brownback to release the names of potential nominees to the Kansas Court of Appeals, after promising Kansans that his process—which replaced the merit-based system that had been in place since the court was created—would be open and transparent.

“Kansans need to ask themselves, ‘what is Governor Brownback hiding’ by not releasing the names of applicants to the Kansas Court of Appeals,” said former Assistant Majority Leader and State Chair of the Republican Party Rep. Rochelle Chronister. “Governor Brownback promised Kansans that his system would be open and transparent, but this is the exact opposite. We have seen these tactics increasingly used by the Obama Administration, but we would hope that Governor Brownback wouldn’t follow that lead. It doesn’t work for Washington and it shouldn’t work here. Unfortunately, by not coming clean with voters, Kansans are left to wonder if he is attempting to pack the court.”

During the 2013 session, the Kansas Legislature, at Governor Brownback's urging, changed the way Appeals Court judges are selected. The new system is based on politics, where Governor Brownback appoints judges and the Kansas Senate confirms them. New Jersey is the only other state that uses this system. Before 2013, Appeals Court judges were selected the same way Kansas Supreme Court Justices are selected: a nine-member nominating commission, made up of attorneys and members of the public, would vet and interview candidates for open seats. The commission would identify the most qualified applicants, and Governor Brownback would appoint one of these finalists to the bench. This process, known as merit selection, is enshrined in the Kansas Constitution and has been in place for over 60 years.

Chronister went on to say, “I think it’s important to remember that this is the second highest court in the state. And, any time that a politician attempts to do something in private, we should be worried. Government should be transparent and open; the public deserves to have a voice in this process. We need qualified judges so that we can ensure that our courts remain free and fair for all Kansans.”

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