

POISED POLITICS: Future of the Wisconsin Court

2009 NON-PARTISAN LEGAL SUMMIT

WHERE:

County Clare Inn, Michael Joyce Room
1234 N Astor Street, Milwaukee WI
<http://countyclare-inn.com/MichaelJoyceRoom.html>

WHEN:

Friday, March 20th, 2009
6pm – 8pm

WHO:

John Siefert, Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge & featured Plaintiff
Mike McCabe, Executive Director, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign
Torrean Edwards, Former UW Football player, Milwaukee entrepreneur & political consultant
Louis Butler (invited), Former Justice, Wisconsin Supreme Court
Mark Pocan (invited), State Assembly (78th District)
Jon Erpenbach (invited), State Senate (27th District)

PROGRAM:

A legal forum to discuss the Honorable John Siefert's recently won case granting judges expanded freedoms in political races. Is this harmful to Wisconsin democracy and an impartial judiciary? This decision demands debate within the legal & wider community. Presenting a unique opportunity, this summit will provide a press venue & meeting of the minds of Wisconsin's elite public servants. It aims to foster a model of poised political campaigns in our state, & promote a clear strategy for passing public financing legislation for State Supreme Court races in 2009.

Judge Barbara Crabb's ruling asks:

"How can the integrity of the judiciary be preserved without unduly inhibiting the conversation between a judicial candidate and the electorate?"

She later concludes:

"[Amidst policing elections, regulatory bodies] weigh many competing factors in choosing a particular course, all the while being pulled in different directions by the candidates, the courts and the public. Despite the challenges, it does not follow that the government, the legal community and the general public should simply throw in the towel and adopt an "anything goes" approach... many reformers are advocating solutions that involve greater use of public financing, monitoring groups, voter guides, public evaluations of candidates by bar associations [etc.] Whatever route the government takes, it should be hesitant in seeking to improve the judiciary by limiting the discussions that candidates may have with the public."