

Aug. 4 measure aims to dispel mystery from process for nominating justices to Kansas Supreme Court

By Chuck Weber

It's likely that the most important issue on the upcoming Aug. 4 primary ballot doesn't involve a candidate. It's a constitutional amendment question designed to restore power to the people of Kansas for the process of selecting Kansas Supreme Court justices.

The current state Supreme Court justice selection system is out of line with our time-tested American values of fairness and transparency.

The truth is, the current selection process for Kansas Supreme Court justices lacks transparency (is secretive) and is tightly controlled by a small number of lawyers who do not reflect the values of everyday Kansans. We now have a chance to correct this injustice.

I am traveling the state making presentations and answering questions about the importance of a "Yes" vote on the judicial selection question. Meanwhile, it is instructive to consider that Planned Parenthood and its allies oppose the initiative. My passion to correct a systemic wrong is rooted in Catholic teach-

ing about engaging the world for the common good. Catholics are called to civic engagement and involvement as a moral obligation rooted in the gospel. This is our time to exercise what we call faithful citizenship.

Right to vote

The August primary is typically a time in which the respective political parties select nominees for various state and local races. But this August,

in addition to those races, there will be a ballot question titled: Selection of Justices of the Supreme Court.

Everyone can vote on this question, even those with no registered party affiliation.

The language is clear and to the point, beginning with the first sentence: "The citizens of Kansas who are qualified electors shall elect the

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justices of the supreme court."

Voting YES and restoring power to the people is the heart of the matter. The people of Kansas can and should vote for state Supreme Court justices. This direct vote process – one that Kansans used for the first 100 years of our statehood – will replace the current system in which Kansas lawyers effectively control who sits on the Kansas high court.

The Kansas Nominating Com-

mission that currently oversees candidates for the state high court is the only system of its kind in the entire United States. A small group of Kansas lawyers – not regular citizens – control and select who sits on the Kansas Supreme Court.

"The current nominating commission process operating behind closed doors is done by unelected lawyers," says retired Wichita Judge Dan Brooks, an advocate of a yes vote on judicial selection. "Election

of our justices by all citizens will bring sunlight to the process while allowing open debate and media scrutiny."

Parishes and groups interested in a presentation on the ballot initiative may contact me at chuck.weber58@gmail.com.

Chuck Weber is a former state legislator from Wichita who also served the bishops of Kansas for eight years as executive director of the Kansas Catholic Conference.