



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2012

CONTACT

Alli Gerkman, Director of Communications, IAALS, (303) 871-6612, agerkman@du.edu

'Know Your Judge' Website a Tool for Colorado Voters in Judicial Races

Denver, Colo. – This November, in addition to executive and legislative candidates, Colorado voters will be deciding whether or not to retain Colorado judges. Under Colorado's system for selecting and retaining judges, all judges who will appear on the ballot must undergo a performance evaluation, the results of which are provided to the public as a tool for casting an informed retention vote. A website—www.knowyourjudge.com—is helping voters locate this information for the judges who will appear on their ballot.

Know Your Judge directs voters to the information provided by the Colorado Office of Judicial Performance Evaluation, including evaluation results for judges in each county, and court of appeals judges and supreme court justices who appear on ballots statewide. In addition to the evaluation results, which are presented in both narrative and detailed form, there is a recommendation of “retain,” “do not retain,” or “no opinion” for each evaluated judge based on that judge's performance on the bench. These recommendations are carefully formulated by the Colorado Commissions on Judicial Performance, based on comprehensive data collected as part of the evaluation process.

Official judicial performance evaluation programs have been established in 17 states and the District of Columbia, and in seven of these states performance evaluation results are provided to voters for use in retention elections. The broad-based and objective performance information collected by these programs is particularly important given the growing number of anti-retention efforts against state court judges on the basis of individual rulings with which special interests may disagree. In both Iowa and Florida this election cycle, state supreme court justices standing for retention are facing anti-retention campaigns on the basis of a particular court decision. In Iowa, a similar effort in 2010 was successful in unseating the three supreme court justices standing for retention that year. Neither Iowa nor Florida has an official JPE program for the benefit of voters.

The *Know Your Judge* website was developed in 2010 to help draw attention to this resource for voters, and to provide Colorado citizens with information about how their judges are selected, evaluated, and retained. In a 2010 post-election poll, judicial performance evaluations were the most commonly mentioned source of information about Colorado judges, and more than 4 in 10 Coloradoans who visited the *Know Your Judge* website found it helpful in making their voting decisions.

The effort is sponsored by the Colorado Bar Association, in partnership with the Colorado Judicial Institute, the League of Women Voters® of Colorado Education Fund, and IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver.

###