

# **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Akron Bar Association to Reassess Campaign Conduct Pledge Process**

August 22, 2016 – During each campaign season the Akron Bar Association evaluates candidates for judicial office and monitors their campaign conduct through a conduct pledge. Today, the Akron Bar Association announced that it is suspending the campaign conduct pledge and process for Summit County judicial candidates to reassess the pledge and the role of the Bar Association’s Judicial Campaign Conduct Committee.

“We have received a great deal of feedback about the pledge and how it is applied – from judicial candidates and from outside observers who are not part of the elections process – and we’ve concluded that this is a necessary step,” said C. Allen Nichols, executive director of the Akron Bar Association. “As such, we are withdrawing the pledge for this election cycle and we are reassessing because we have come to believe that the pledge and process should be reviewed in order to accomplish our goal of all judicial candidates running fair, honest and ethical campaigns,”

Nichols emphasized that Canon 4 of the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct already provides oversight for campaigns and is overseen by the Ohio Supreme Court. All Summit County judicial candidates are bound by and have agreed to abide by those canons.

The campaign conduct pledge was instituted by the Akron Bar Association in 2012, but Nichols said newly-identified concerns about the difficulty of enforcing local standards in what has become an evolving body of judicial campaign laws and regulations highlight the need for this reassessment.

“In the end, after very careful consideration of the feedback about the pledge in its current form, we believe that significant concerns have been raised as to enforceability and that it’s time for a thorough re-evaluation,” Nichols said.

Nichols added that the Akron Bar Association strives to be neutral in judicial races and the decision to reassess best serves its purposes of enhancing the quality of law and justice through community services and maintaining the integrity of the profession.

The Akron Bar Association believes it has an important and continuing role to play in promoting the appropriate conduct of judicial campaigns to ensure they are conducted in a manner consistent with the importance of, and the integrity of, the offices that the candidates seek, Nichols said. This reassessment will allow the Akron Bar Association to examine the totality of judicial campaigns, including the laws and regulations that govern them. This process will be designed to further contribute to the decorum and professionalism of candidates while maintaining an equitable balance, Nichols said.

The reassessment of the Judicial Campaign Conduct Committee is unrelated to and will not affect the longstanding tradition of the Akron Bar Association evaluating candidates for judicial office through its Commission on Judicial Candidates. Integrity is one criteria of this evaluation process and a candidate’s campaign conduct is a consideration in the rating the Commission offers. Look for the announcement of the 2016 judicial ratings on [www.youbethejudgesummitcounty.com](http://www.youbethejudgesummitcounty.com) in early September and updates thereafter as needed.

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*The Akron Bar Association, through education, advocacy and community service, empowers its members to reflect the highest professional standards, enabling them to earn the community’s utmost respect so our legal system will be recognized as fair, accessible and just.*