



Primary decides for Supreme Court

Wenatchee World Editorial Board

Saturday, July 7, 2012

There is at least one statewide race that will be decided in the Aug. 7 primary, and it deserves your attention. Voters will choose a justice for the state Supreme Court, which surely has to rank as one of the most important and far-reaching decisions put before the state's voters in the first week of August.

It is not the custom of this page to endorse candidates, but for the purpose of voter education it would be worthwhile to relay our experience and impressions of Justice Steven Gonzalez. Voters will choose between the incumbent Gonzalez and his sole opponent, Kitsap County attorney Bruce C. Danielson. Under Washington law, if one candidate in a judicial race receives more than 50 percent of the primary vote, it is decided. In this race that will surely happen, which makes its summer-cloaked obscurity unfortunate, considering we will decide who fills one of the state's highest and most consequential offices.

Gonzalez was appointed to the Supreme Court by Gov. Chris Gregoire in January, replacing the retiring Justice Gerry Alexander. He came to the court after serving 10 years as a judge of the King County Superior Court. Prior to that, Gonzalez was an assistant United States attorney and part of the team that prosecuted Ahmed Ressam, the so-called Millennial Bomber who plotted to attack Los Angeles International Airport. He has served as a national instructor on terrorism prosecution. He is a California

native, graduate of the University of California and Berkeley School of Law, studied in Japan and China, and speaks Japanese, Chinese and Spanish.

Gonzalez came for an interview in April, answering a wide range of questions with patience, intelligence and obvious dedication to the law. In the last question, he was asked how it felt to have reporters ask him about being the “first Latino on the state Supreme Court.” He was proud of his heritage, he said, but was thinking how refreshing it was to have an interview with no question about ethnicity. “I take this job seriously,” he said.

We have had no contact with his opponent Danielson, who has raised and spent no money on his campaign. He has run unsuccessfully for local office three times, but has no judicial experience or bar endorsements and lists little that could be considered a qualification. Gonzalez is rated exceptionally qualified by state and local bar associations, is endorsed by every fellow Supreme Court justice, the Association of Washington Business, state Labor Council, gubernatorial candidates Rob McKenna and Jay Inslee and many others of varied background.

There is no printed voter’s guide for the primary election. More information on the candidates can be found on the secretary of state’s website, at wei.sos.wa.gov/agency/osos/en/Pages/OnlineVotersGuide.aspx.

We recommend that you study the material, weigh their qualifications and choose Steven Gonzalez for state Supreme Court.

This is the opinion of The Wenatchee World and its Editorial Board: Publisher Rufus Woods, Editor Cal FitzSimmons and Editorial Page Editor Tracy Warner