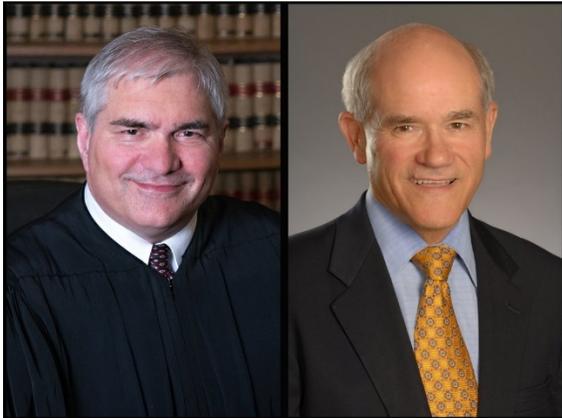


Nasty attack ad against Justice Wiggins has no place in state Supreme Court race

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Dave Larson, left, presiding judge of the Federal Way Municipal Court, is challenging incumbent Justice Charlie Wiggins for Position 6 on the state Supreme Court.

A vicious TV ad attacking state Supreme Court Justice Charlie Wiggins is unacceptable and harmful.

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By
[Seattle Times editorial board](#)

The Seattle Times

THIS election season is bad enough without vicious mudslinging in Washington State Supreme Court races.

The raft of newcomers challenging the three incumbent justices and highlighting court issues are welcome.

Fear-inducing TV ads attacking Justice Charlie Wiggins are not welcome, however, and will have a negative effect extending beyond the election.

This editorial board [endorsed Judge Dave Larson](#), Wiggins' challenger. A Federal Way Municipal Court judge, Larson is a former school-board president who would bring fresh perspectives on critical education cases the court is refereeing.

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Even so, the independently funded attack ad, [paid for by wealthy contributors](#) who want change on the court, is unacceptable.

Echoing the notorious Willie Horton ad targeting the 1988 presidential campaign of Michael Dukakis, the piece attacking Wiggins wrongly asserts that he's playing politics and putting children at risk by releasing pedophiles.

The ad refers to a May [ruling written by Wiggins, that was](#) supported by the court majority, which was indeed problematic. It revolved around constitutional questions of whether police gave required warnings before making a warrantless search of an Ephrata home in 2009. Police were responding to a tip that Michael Budd had child pornography and was messaging minors.

The ruling upheld a state Court of Appeals finding that police erred, and those charges against Budd were dismissed. He was then arrested in Yakima earlier this month for allegedly attempting to solicit sex with a 14-year-old.

Larson cites the Budd case as an example of “unworkable” criminal-justice writings by Wiggins. That’s a worthy campaign point, but it doesn’t justify smearing a justice — and the court majority — as endangering children.

Voters should also be aware that a handful of Washington’s wealthiest residents are [spending a small fortune on political-action committees](#) to unseat Wiggins.

Higher engagement in state politics should be a positive development, especially when it’s motivated by concerns about improving education opportunities for Washington children.

But extreme politicking will erode the public’s faith in the court’s independence. Even the worthiest candidate would suffer if it appears their seat were won with the nastiest ads money can buy.

Editorial board members are editorial page editor Kate Riley, Frank A. Blethen, Donna Gordon Blankinship, Brier Dudley, Mark Higgins, Jonathan Martin, William K. Blethen (emeritus) and Robert C. Blethen (emeritus).