SEATTLE WEEKLY

Sweep the Sweepers! Our Endorsements For the Nov. 7 Election

What you need to know about every race on the ballot.

COURT OF APPEALS

DIVISION 1, DISTRICT 1, POS. 2

Michael S. Spearman

At first glance, this race appears to be between a qualified incumbent and an unqualified challenger. Incumbent Michael S. Spearman served as a state judge on the King County Superior Court for 12 years in addition to his seven years on Appeals, plus several years as a public defender. He boasts a slew of endorsements and is rated exceptionally well-qualified by every bar group that's opined on the race. Nathan Choi, by contrast, has one endorsement from a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Hawaii. He boasts on his campaign website that he's a member of Mensa, a club for people with high scores on certain kinds of intelligence tests: "It can be almost assured that [other candidates] do not hold a Mensa Certificate. With Nathan Choi, you know your vote will ensure an Extremely Intelligent Judge that will make the right decisions for King County's prosperity and sustainability." But on closer inspection, what looked like a hands-down endorsement of Spearman became a hands-waving-furiously-up-and-down endorsement of Spearman. That's because one of Choi's main criticisms of Spearman is that he is too soft on poor criminals. Choi cites a 2006 decision Spearman made while on the King County Superior Court in a case that involved former prisoners who had served all of their sentence but had not yet fully paid off their legal financial obligations (LFOs). Spearman ruled that people cannot be denied the right to vote based solely on their ability to immediately pay their debts. Refusing to disenfranchise poor people is not a failure of justice, but its fulfillment. Spearman's record defending the least among us as a public defender and jurist is a credit, and Choi's criticism of him for it is telling. Here's what it tells us: "Re-elect Michael Spearman to the Court of Appeals."