

02/12/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
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**TESTIMONY ON HB#/0044- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

**Election Law - Circuit Court Judges - Nonpartisan Elections**

**TO:** Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0044, **Election Law - Circuit Court Judges - Nonpartisan Elections**

Why are partisan judicial races so much more expensive than nonpartisan contests? One answer could be that potential campaign donors find it easier to donate money in these races. In states with partisan judicial elections, there is a ready-built infrastructure for “bundling” donations in place, with state parties acting as conduits for special interests. In judicial elections, these interest groups usually include trial lawyers (for Democratic candidates) and big business groups (for Republican candidates).

Moreover, in partisan elections, campaign donors can be much more certain of a candidate’s views prior to donating money. Partisan primaries tend to force candidates to appeal to the base constituencies of their respective parties, pushing Democrats to the left and Republicans to the right. By the time a candidate is chosen in a partisan primary, special interests can be sure the party’s candidate is a “team player.”<sup>1</sup>

This bill attempts to limit the effect of partisanship in what should be an office concerned with the rule of law and not judgements that support a specific political parties viewpoints on issues before the courts.

Accordingly, this bill will require circuit court judges to be elected on a nonpartisan basis. It will remove political parties from the occasion by prohibiting a candidate for circuit court judge from being nominated by a political party or by petition. It will govern the process by requiring candidates to be nominated at the primary election in each year that one or more circuit court judges are to be elected. The candidates will have to appeal to all voters and not just voters of a particular party to receive enough votes to be nominated for the general election.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0044.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/partisan-judicial-elections-and-the-distorting-influence-of-campaign-cash/>