

Local News

Judicial candidates prefer not to run for office

All agree justices should be appointed based on merit

By **Gary Stern**
Staff Writer

Two Republican incumbents representing the sprawling 9th Judicial District of the state Supreme Court are running for their second 14-year terms, opposed by a Mount Vernon City Court judge and an acting village justice in Tarrytown.

Aldo A. Nastasi of Yonkers and Ralph A. Beisner of Dutchess County are seeking their second terms on the Supreme Court,

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They are both running on the Republican, Conservative and Right to Life lines.

Making her second run at the Supreme Court bench on the Democratic line is Doris T. Friedman of Irvington. She is a lawyer in private practice specializing in matrimonial law and an acting village justice in Tarrytown since 1987. Also on the Democratic line is Sam Walker, City Court judge in Mount Vernon since 1995 and a former patent lawyer for General Foods Corp. in White Plains.

The candidates, except for Beisner, met recently with the editorial board of Gannett Suburban Newspapers. They are prohibited by judicial conduct codes from criticizing one another and generally discussed their own records.

Beisner, who was on vacation, met earlier with the editorial board.

The candidates agreed that they should not have to run for office and that state Supreme Court justices should be appointed based on merit.

"I think some machinery ought to be put in place, where if you're on the bench, you are evaluated and reappointed," said Nastasi, who described himself as out of the political loop after more than a decade on the bench.

Walker, though, said an appointment system would only work if it ensured diversity on the bench.

The candidates discussed ways to reduce delays and inefficiency, the subject of 12 state task forces hoping to streamline the civil trial system. Nastasi said cases can be better assigned, while Friedman said an activist judge can move a case along by, among other things, allowing fewer recesses.

Walker said he favored "making the courts more user-friendly."

Friedman did object to Nastasi and Beisner taking the Right to Life line.

"It is not appropriate for anyone who is or wishes to be part of the judicial system to take a line that professes a certain action," she said.

Nastasi said he had no problem taking the Right to Life Party's endorsement and that he has never had to deal with an abortion-related issue. Beisner said he takes the endorsement because it provides votes and the party does not ask him for any commitments.

The 9th District includes Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess and Orange counties. Supreme Court justices are paid \$113,000.