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NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

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FAX COVER SHEET

Tuesday 10/23/90
DATE

8:30 a.m.
TIME

TO: Jonathan Handman New York Times

FAX NUMBER: 212/556-4603

This fax consists of a total of 2 pages, including this cover sheet. If you do not receive the indicated number of pages, or if there is a question as to the transmittal, please call (914) 997-1677.

FROM: Doris L Sassower

MESSAGE: Dave Margolick said you would love this story - please call a Sap for further details + documentation!

Ex "S-1" Doris Sassower

(S)

THE NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE
(914) 997-8105
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S T A T E M E N T

The Ninth Judicial District comprises the counties of Westchester, Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Orange. Almost a million registered voters.

THIS IS THE STORY . . .

OF the three-year barter contract, put in writing, by the Republican and Democratic party leaders and their hand-picked judicial candidates to guarantee their no-contest election in the Ninth Judicial District.

OF the written pledge by the judicial candidates that, following election, they will divvy up judicial appointments on the recommendations of party leaders, based on patronage, not merit.

OF fraudulently-run judicial nominating conventions

OF perjurious nomination certificates and convention minutes sworn to by prominent lawyers, filed with the Board of Elections

OF a Board of Elections that refused to investigate evidence of criminal misconduct by the party officials involved

OF a Lower Court Judge who rewrote the facts to cover up the illegal political deal and convention fraud

OF an Appellate Court which has stalled the process of review--despite its own rules requiring a preference be given to election cases--and set up roadblocks to prevent the matter being heard prior to the November 6, 1990 election;

OF the unrestrained perversion of constitutional voting rights and election law safeguards by public officials, government agencies and the courts themselves--and the challenge being made on behalf of the public in the case of Castracan v. Colavita.

At issue are not only the nominations for two Supreme Court judgeships and the judgeship of Westchester County Surrogate Court--but whether constitutional voting rights and Election Law safeguards will be enforced by our courts.

An Order to Show Cause, returnable Monday, October 29, 1990, in Albany, at the Appellate Division, Third Department, will decide whether this case should be given the preferred attention that the law and the court's own rules require so that these issues can be addressed on the merits before the November 6th election.

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FAX COVER SHEET

DATE 10/23/90

TIME 1 pm

TO: NY Times: Jonathan Landman

FAX NUMBER: 212-556-4603

This fax consists of a total of 17 pages, including this cover sheet. If you do not receive the indicated number of pages, or if there is a question as to the transmittal, please call (914) 997-1677.

FROM: Doris L. Sassower

MESSAGE: I hope the brief summary sent to you earlier today, as suggested by Dave Margolick, has whetted your news appetite for more. Here is a copy of my application for the Order To Show Cause just signed by Judge Mikoll putting the preference issue on for Monday October 29th.

NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

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FAX COVER SHEET

Tues 10/23/90 3 p.m.
DATE TIME

TO: Tessa Melvin NY Times
Westchester

FAX NUMBER: 949-2613

This fax consists of a total of _____ pages, including this cover sheet. If you do not receive the indicated number of pages, or if there is a question as to the transmittal, please call (914) 997-1677.

FROM: Doris Sassower

MESSAGE: As discussed this morning
Please get this into
this weekend's edition
Thank you so much!
Thanks!

DS
Ex "S-2"

(S)

ELI VIGLIANO
CHAIRMAN, NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

Letters to the Editor
New York Times
Westchester Edition

Your October 17, 1990 story "Agreement on Judicial Candidates" was in error. No lawsuit was filed last year by the Ninth Judicial Committee. And, obviously, none was dismissed.

However, fraud and other Election Law violations in the Ninth Judicial District were the subject of complaint to Governor Cuomo last year. No investigation or corrective action was taken by the New York State Board of Elections to whom the Governor referred the matter.

This year, the complained-of violations at the Judicial Nominating Conventions of the Republican and Democratic parties were brazenly repeated. Such violations are detailed and documented in the case of Castracan v. Colavita, now pending in the Appellate Division, Third Department. An Order to Show Cause, returnable on Monday, October 29, 1990, will decide whether this Election Law case will be given the preference that the court's own rules provide so that it can be heard before the election.

This important case challenges the illegal contract entered into by the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Ninth Judicial District--whereby a Three Year Plan was adopted dividing up juddgeships and patronage appointments, in contravention of the Constitution, penal provisions of the Election Law, and Court Rules of Judicial Ethics.

This lawsuit has been brought in the public interest to enforce voting rights protected under the Constitution and the Election Laws of the State of New York. Approximately a million voters in the Ninth Judicial District, are directly affected by the final decision of this case. The profound and far-reaching ramifications of the case will transcend the upcoming election.



ELI VIGLIANO

Chairman, NINTH JUDICIAL COMMITTEE

October 23, 1990

URGENT

To: DOROTHY SAMUEL
New York Times

From: Doug L. Sussow (FAX #)
Tel 914 1997-1677 814/684-6554

Date: 10/29/90 4:10

Fax: 212/556-4603

As per our phone conversation,
I am faxing a copy of the
League's press release, as well as the
AP story both for release today &
hereafter - Your help is much appreciated!

My final submission for a
preference & an emergency interim
stay of the election for 2 Supreme
Court positions in the 9th Judicial
District & the Surrogate of Westchester
County position went in today
to the Appellate Division 3rd Dept
in Albany - Order to Show Cause was
signed by Justice Ann Mc Koll.

Ex "S-3"



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS**
OF NEW YORK STATE

President
Susan K. Schwardt

FOR RELEASE OCTOBER 26, 1990

CONTACT: Lenore Banks
(716) 836-5240
Susan Schwardt
(716) 671-6670

CROSS-ENDORSEMENT CASE SHOULD BE HEARD

The League of Women Voters of New York State alerts voters to an election law case, Castracan v. Colavita, pertaining to the upcoming November 6, 1990 election of justices for the Supreme Court in the 9th Judicial District and Surrogate Court of Westchester County.

Susan Schwardt, President of the League of Women Voters of New York State, states: "It should be determined in court whether the contract between party leaders and judicial nominees involving a series of judicial cross-endorsements over a three year period is legal or not legal and whether there were violations of the Election Law at the judicial nominating conventions. The case deserves to be heard and decided by the Appellate Division, 3rd Department, before the general election."

FOR: PORTS -> ASSOWER
FROM: MARC Lambert
Doris Sassower

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*20-NY--Albany Monday-Judges, ADV29, 1085
*adv 29

*For Release Monday 5:45 Oct 29 and thereafter
*New York's 'Cross Endorsement' Judge Selection Challenged
*By MARG HUMBERT

*AP Political Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - While most of New York state's judges are elected, voters often find they really have no choice when it comes to selecting those who pronounce the sentences meant to protect society from evil.

Under 'cross-endorsement' agreements, local political leaders often decide who will be the judges. Each party's judicial convention endorses the other's candidates and voters see just one name on the ballot for each opening.

The process is under challenge by a group of Westchester County residents calling themselves the Ninth Judicial Committee. The committee's attorney is Doris Sassower, a self-described 'tenacious' White Plains lawyer. The lawsuit, which has attracted little public notice, has reached a state appeals court in Albany.

While the dispute over how judges get to be judges has been going on for years, the lawsuit may be the first to challenge the process in court, according to M.L. Henry, executive director of the Committee for Modern Courts.

Calling the state's process of electing judges 'shameful,' Henry's lobbying group has called for the merit selection of judges.

There are other voices complaining about the elective system. 'Judicial elections are so captive to the interests of political party organizations that they clash with the ideal of an independent and non-partisan judiciary,' the state Commission on Government Integrity concluded in a 1988 report.

That ethics panel, appointed by Gov. Mario Cuomo, called for New York's system of electing judges to be replaced by an appointive process.

Since 1978, following voter approval of a state constitutional amendment, the seven judges of New York's top tribunal, the Court of Appeals, have been appointed by the governor, subject to approval by the state Senate. Until then, the judges had been elected. Some other judges are also appointed.

Excluding 2,242 elected town and village judges, there are 1,067 judges who make up the city, county and state judicial system in New York. Of that, 842 judges are elected and 225 are appointed.

While most cross-endorsement deals are arranged with handshakes or verbal agreements, the political leaders in the Ninth Judicial District put a three-year pact in writing last year. It provided for who would be elected to certain judgeships.

'This was done totally openly. There was nothing hidden or secretive,' Westchester's GOP Chairman Anthony Colavita, a former state Republican chairman, said of the agreement. 'I don't believe it's improper.'

'These are the deals that used to be made behind closed doors in smoke-filled rooms,' Sassower said. 'They carted away these judgeships.'

The written agreement, according to court papers, called for judges elected under the agreement to 'provide equal access and consideration, if any, to the recommendations of the leaders of each major political party in conjunction with proposed judicial

The agreement appears to even extend to the hiring of staff personnel," state Supreme Court Justice Lawrence Kahn said recently in ruling on the case.

Nonetheless, Kahn ruled against Sassower.

A political maverick who challenged Albany County's powerful Democratic Party machine to win his first judgeship, Kahn said party leaders had properly held judicial conventions that ratified their choices. That, said Kahn, made the deal legal.

"The practice of cross-endorsement of judicial candidates is not presently prohibited by the (state) Election Law," Kahn wrote.

Noting that the three-year written pact was certain "to fuel the debate," Kahn said "the proper forum must be the (state) legislature ... which has the sole power to amend the process by which judicial candidates are chosen."

"They masked their scheme with some window-dressing," Sassower said of the judicial conventions that ratified the deals negotiated by the party leaders.

Calling the three-year pact "a judicial Watergate," Sassower, a former president of the New York Women's Bar Association, appealed Kahn's ruling to the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court. She asked for an immediate hearing.

A lawyer for 35 years, Sassower said she expected her request to be routinely granted because the appeals court was about to begin a recess that would last beyond Election Day. Several judicial offices being challenged by Sassower's lawsuit are scheduled to be filled in the Ninth Judicial District by the Nov. 5 election.

The appeals court, however, refused to give Sassower an immediate hearing and went into recess a week ago Friday.

In a letter to Sassower, Chief Clerk Michael Novack said Presiding Justice Franklin Mahoney had decided against an immediate hearing because "it would be wholly inappropriate to attempt to render a reasoned decision in this case under such circumstances and time constraints."

Sassower has appealed Mahoney's decision and still hopes to have a hearing before Election Day. Either way, she said she'll take the case as far as she can in the court system.

Sassower maintains that "it should be obvious to anyone who is aware of the political realities," why she's having trouble obtaining a quick hearing on her case.

"We are bucking the most powerful forces in society ... Certainly there's a great value to those who are the beneficiaries of this system to perpetuate it," she said.

Chief Clerk Novack said that while most election cases are "usually given a preference ... there's no absolute guarantee that every case will be heard and decided before Election Day."

Novack also said Sassower "has a lot of ideas, about why her preference (request) was denied, which are not accurate."

Sassower's lawsuit seeks to have the three-year pact, negotiated in 1988 by Colavita and then-Westchester Democratic Chairman Richard Calogarten, declared "illegal."

The lawsuit asks that the nominations of Democrat Francis Nicolai and Republican Howard Miller for state Supreme Court and Republican Robert Marshall for Westchester County Surrogate be overturned and their names removed from the Nov. 5 ballot.

The Ninth Judicial District includes Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Rockland and Orange counties.

Colevita said that if the members of the Ninth Judicial Committee
were so upset about the three-year agreement, they should have taken
their fight to the ballot box and presented their own judicial
candidates.

"None of us have any political aspirations," Eli Vigliano,
chairman of the committee and a lawyer for 40 years, countered.
"I'm not a candidate, I'm not running, and I don't want to become the
next one."

Colevita said the group's lawsuit was "totally without merit."
"The agreement provided excellent people from both parties. It was
good government," Colevita said. "It was also good politics."

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