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N.Y. watchdogs: Test judges' mental state

By JACK NEWFIELD
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New Yorkers prominent in law enforcement, city politics and government "watchdogging" have been quick to react to The Post's "10 Worst Judges" series by proposing a variety of improvements to the judicial system.

Among the suggestions sparked by The Post's investigations:

- Psychiatric evaluation of judges after they've served part of their term.

- Open public hearings on all judicial appointments.

- Referendums on judicial performance after two years.

- Shorter terms.

- Continued scrutiny of judges by the press — by making The Post's "10 Worst Judges" an annual feature.

"Keep it up," cheered former Mayor Ed Koch. "It was a very good series. You've just gotten the camel's nose under the tent. Get the whole camel."

City Council President Andrew Stein added: "The New York Post has performed a valuable public service in drawing attention to city judges who are not properly dispensing justice.

"These judges have abused their office, and do

not deserve to be able to continue to serve."

Former U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, a mayoral hopeful, said the press has to take the lead in exposing bad judges because lawyers and the bar associations have to worry about courtroom reprisals.

"The Post series will make those who appoint judges worry about their decisions and give more attention to them," Giuliani said.

Henry Stern, head of the Citizens Union, said: "So little attention is given to judges once they're on the bench that they're less well known than the criminals they sentence or release."

Stern said incumbent judges should be evaluated by a panel of lawyers, judges and psychiatrists.

"Judges are not immune from the ravages of mental illness. There should be a way to remove them short of their taking bribes," he said.

Former Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo called for Mayor Dinkins' Committee on the Judiciary to hold open public hearings on all judicial applicants.

"It's now a secret operation," he said. "The Post should run this series every year. Only the press can hold these judges accountable."