



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John L. Sampson

Senator John Sampson, Chair Of NYS Senate Judiciary Committee To Hold Hearings On Selection Process For Appointment Of Chief Judge

JOHN L. SAMPSON January 12, 2009

(Albany, NY)- Senator John Sampson, Chair of the New York State Senate Judiciary Committee, today, announced that his first order of business in convening the Judiciary Committee, prior to addressing the appointment of the new Chief Judge, is to hold hearings concerning the criteria employed by the Commission on Judicial Nomination during its selection process. At the hearings, Senator Sampson plans to ask members of the Commission and its Chair, John O'Mara to testify concerning how the Commission decided on its final list of candidates and the methods it employed throughout the candidate selection process.

"I find it incomprehensible and deeply disturbing that not a single woman appeared on the list of qualified judicial candidates to succeed Judith Kaye, our first female Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals," said Senator Sampson. "As the birthplace of women's suffrage and civil and political rights, the Commission failed to meet the high standards and great tradition of our state when it failed to include a woman on its list of candidates for our highest court," said Senator Sampson.

The vacancy on the Court of Appeals was created by the mandatory retirement of Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye on December 31, 2008. In a December 1, 2008 letter to the Governor, John O'Mara, the former lobbyist appointed by Republican Governor George Pataki to chair the eleven-member Commission, submitted a list seven candidates to fill the vacancy, but failed to include a single woman on its list. Over the past 10 years, 22 men and only 6 women have been chosen as candidates to fill the 8 vacancies that occurred during that period.

"Any process that ignores the substantial role women have played in the history of our state and the judicial process is flawed," said Senator Sampson. "We need to show a true commitment to providing opportunities for all qualified candidates, particularly women. As Chair of the Judiciary Committee I want to know what went wrong and why, so it cannot be permitted to happen again," said Senator Sampson.