



Cheyenne Herald

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Laramie County Circuit Court Judge Denise Nau is considered the worst Circuit Court Judge in Wyoming. By attorneys!

When about four out of ten attorneys who practice in her courtroom consider her a lousy judge, based on several legal and personal criteria, should that judge be retained for another four years. Unfortunately, the same judgment by Wyoming attorneys who practice in front of her was held in 2006 and she was retained. She has not gotten better. To her credit, she has not gotten worse. She has consistently been a mediocre to poor jurist.

Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming (WYSAC) is commissioned each two years to analyze and report on a survey taken of attorneys, regarding the various Supreme Court Justices, District Court and Circuit Court Judges who are up for retention in that year.

In 2010, two Supreme Court Justices (Kite and Voigt, coincidental the current Chief Justice and the immediate past Chief Justice), two Laramie County District Court Judges (Campbell and Davis) and all three Circuit Court Judges (Coates, Nau and Rogers) are on the ballot for a vote on retention. This question is almost as certain to turn out positive for the jurists as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad winning another term as president of Iran. Here, voters just don't care about these offices. Over there, well, you can guess why he wins.

Laramie County not only boasts the worst Circuit Court judge, the county is also home to the third worst. But, Roberta Coates only had a little more than three in ten attorneys "disapprove" of her performance, not close to Nau.

Consider this: There are eleven (11) Circuit Court judges and seven (7) District Court judges on the ballot and five of the eighteen are from Laramie County. We've either got a lot of judges or a lot of crime. Or both. If you add in the two Supreme Court justices, there are twenty (20) jurists on the ballot. Of the 20, four were "opposed" by at least twenty percent (20%) of the attorneys who participated in the survey. Of the four with at least two in ten attorneys saying "not so good, justice/judge," one (Voigt) was opposed by 20.2%, barely making the List of Shame. Three (all Circuit Court judges) were opposed by more than 30% of the participating attorneys. Two are from Laramie County. We sure can pick 'em, huh? Only Circuit Court Judge Jane Eakin of the Second Judicial District (Rawlins) was in a league with Nau and Coates. But, to be fair, she was only judged by 35 attorneys. Nau was assessed by 53

and Coates by 72 (the most of any Circuit Court judge assessed). Roberta Coates is, remember, a judge I watched dismiss all cited charges against a county resident, then find him guilty of a violation for which he was not charged. **AND THEN FINE HIM FOR THAT UNCITED VIOLATION!**

Back to Denise Nau. In addition to almost four in ten Wyoming attorneys who participated in the WYSAC survey who oppose her retention, two in ten didn't weigh in on her qualities as a judge. For example, on "Courteousness and politeness," 43.4% said they "Somewhat Approve[d]" or "Strongly Approve[d]" while 35.8% responded that they "Somewhat Disapprove[d]" or "Strongly Disapprove[d]." Another 20.8% did not approve or disapprove. Her "scores": "Open-mindedness and impartiality in judicial matters" (20.8% Strongly Approve), Courteousness and Politeness" (only 18.9% Strongly Approve). Ouch!

Laramie County Circuit Court Judge Denise Nau did not score average or above on a single criteria considered. There were twelve different areas where attorneys made an assessment about a judge or justice.

Statewide, the average percentage of attorneys who "favor" the retention of a specific Circuit Court judge was 81.6%. Denise Nau scored but 62.3% with Laramie County attorneys. And 37.7% of the attorneys opposed her retention. That seems, to this observer, to be a staggering rejection by attorneys who have practiced in her courtroom. **The overall comparison and assessments of the three Laramie County Circuit Court judges can be read on the Cheyenne Herald website. Note the phenomenal support for District Court Judge Michael Davis. Granted, he is newest, but to have only 2% of the participating attorneys (and there were 148 at that level) opposed to his retention speaks volumes about the respect in which he is held.**

Notes: In the 2006 "Poll," Judge Nau was opposed by 36.8% of the attorneys who participated, Judge Coates by 31.3%. It is obvious they have made no effort to improve or, if they have, have failed miserably at becoming better judges. Also note that Catherine Rogers, the newest Circuit Court judge, scored above the state average on every single criteria and had no attorney "Strongly Disapprove" of her retention on any of the twelve issues. None of them. It will interesting to see how she is graded in four years, if retained.

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