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EDITORIAL: Tao and Harter for the Nevada Supreme Court



Las Vegas Review-Journal

October 22, 2018 - 9:00 pm



Nevada is one of 15 states that use contested, nonpartisan elections to select judges. These races present challenges to even the most informed voters, given they are often low-profile and feature well-qualified candidates.

And in a twist, voters face a rarity this cycle: Two competitive races for the state Supreme Court.

High court campaigns are often coronations in which candidates, particularly incumbents, run unopposed. Not this time. While Court of Appeals Chief Judge

Abbi Silver drew no opposition in her bid to replace retiring Justice Michael Douglas, the two other seats are being contested.

In District C, Clark County District Judge Elissa Cadish is running against Jerry Tao, who has served on the Nevada Appellate Court since voters approved its creation in 2014.

Judge Cadish has been on the bench since 2007 and consistently rated highly in the RJ's Judging the Judges surveys. She has a wide breadth of legal experience and an impressive educational pedigree.

Judge Tao has been on the bench since 2011 and earned an 86 percent retention rating in the RJ's 2013 survey of local attorneys. He describes himself as a "textualist and originalist" who rejects the notion of a "living Constitution."

Both of these candidates would perform admirably on the court. But we believe Judge Tao would be more likely to hold the legislative and executive branches accountable for constitutional infringements. We recommend a vote for Judge **Jerry Tao**.

In District G, Clark County Family Court Judge Mathew Harter is hoping to unseat incumbent Justice Lidia Stiglich, appointed in 2016 by Gov. Brian Sandoval.

During her two years on the high court, Justice Stiglich has earned a stellar reputation in the legal community. But she has also revealed a distressing tendency to favor secrecy over transparency — witness her minority opinion last week that would have eviscerated the state's public records law by abetting PERS in its effort to shield information from taxpayers.


Judge Harter emphasizes that his time in Family Court has steeled his willingness to "make the hard decisions." He calls himself a "strict constructionist" and says the courts need "to start following the laws rather than creating the law." Judge **Mathew Harter** earns our recommendation in District G.

Clark County voters must evaluate two other judicial contests. In District Court Department 18, incumbent Judge Mark B. Bailus is running against **Mary Kay Holthus**. Ms. Holthus has been a prosecutor for 27 years, and her background in criminal law gives her the edge. In the race for Las Vegas Justice Court, Department 1, James Dean Leavitt faces **Elana Lee Graham**. Ms. Graham has worked in the Clark County district attorney's office since 2011 and has the more appropriate judicial temperament.

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
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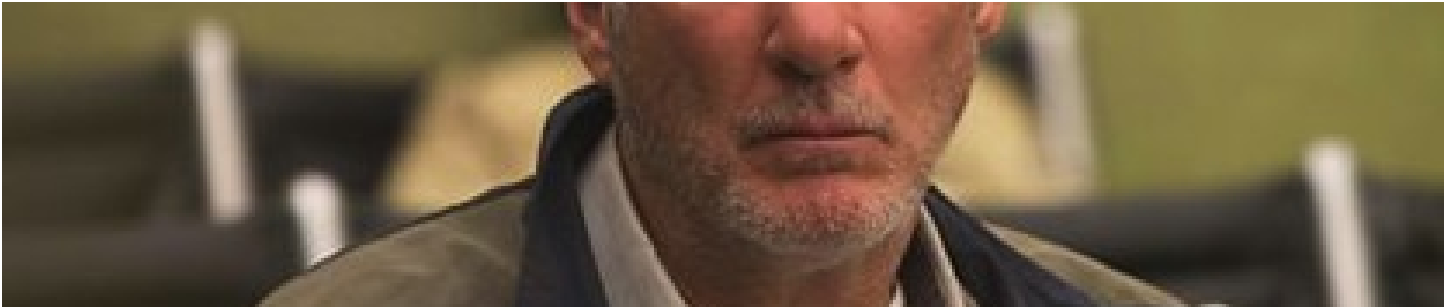
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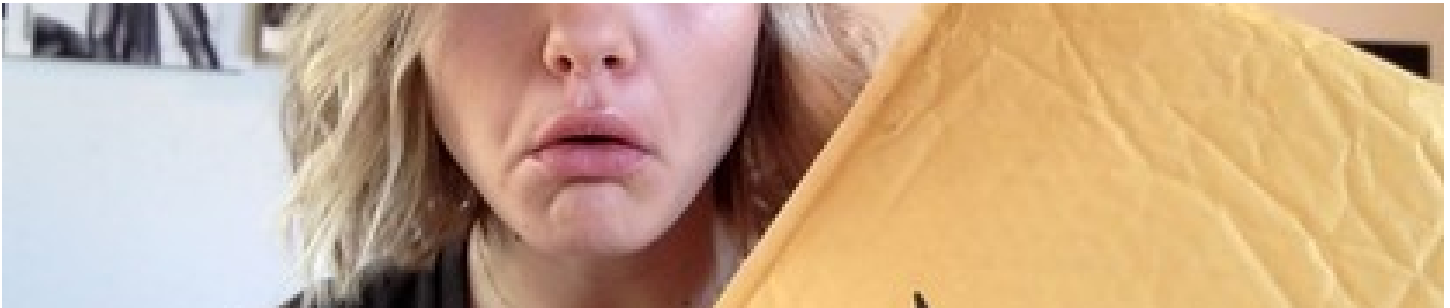
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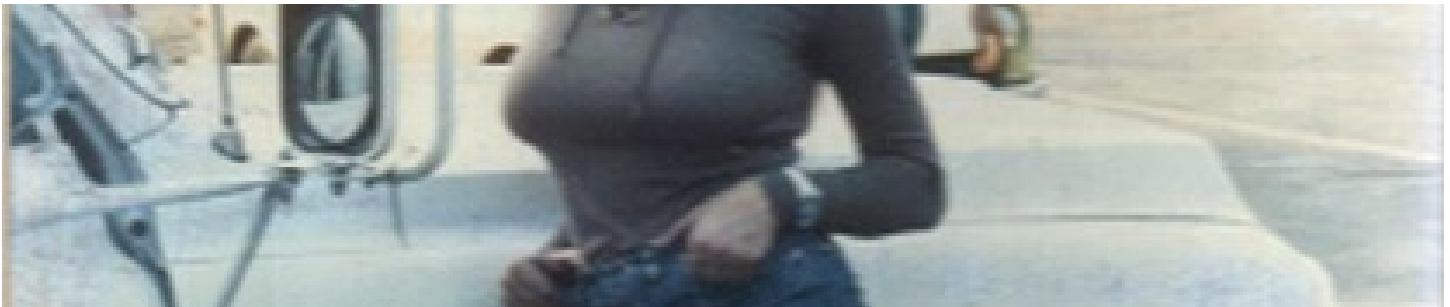
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