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STATEMENT ABOUT DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES BYPASSING JUDGE4YOURSELF

Like many in this county, members of the Cuyahoga County Democratic Party (CCDP) embraced the ideals Judge4Yourself initially championed; another tool to educate voters and increase turnout is certainly commendable.

However, due to concerns about the fairness and practices of Judge4Yourself in recent years, all six of the Democratic nominees in contested Common Pleas Court races this November decided to forego participating in the process this cycle. This decision is not a permanent one, nor was it made at the behest of CCDP leadership, but as Chair I fully support our Democratic candidates. Here are some of the concerns our candidates have voiced:

- A sense that rating results are predetermined in favor of a given candidate, and legal acumen, experience, and ethics matter less than they should because the process is overly subjective.
- Candidates are not given any explanation for the ratings they receive.
- On multiple occasions, candidates appeared before the committee and received a certain rating then just two years later, with more legal experience under their belt, reappeared before the body only to see their ratings decline. This would seem to contradict the goal of rating candidates impartially and independent of who their opponents may be.
- True concerns about the ratings for non-white candidates; indeed, Black candidates scored a full 25% percent lower than white candidates from 2016-2018.
- Requiring candidates to go through the entire process after just doing it 3 months earlier during the primary, which would only be necessary if they're comparing candidates.
- A belief that not all members of the Judge4Yourself committee(s) read the lengthy questionnaires submitted by candidates before interviewing them.
- Lastly, disappointment with the decision to label those whose conscience leads them not to participate as being "Not Recommended." It would seem more fitting that the decision be labeled something more akin to "Did Not Participate."

Choosing whom to vote for is a significant decision, but a necessary one if we're going to preserve our democracy. The CCDP is very willing to work with Judge4Yourself and the six-member bar associations to develop a more equitable, transparent, and sensible process moving forward.

David Brock
Chair
Cuyahoga County Democratic Party

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