



Madison County GOP Chair calls for more GOP judges

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EDWARDSVILLE - On Friday, Madison County GOP Chair Jeremy Plank called on the Third Judicial Circuit to appoint more Republican attorneys to the bench. Twenty-two judges make up the court in the Third Judicial Circuit, which consists of Madison and Bond Counties. Only two of the 22 judges are Republicans and Plank is demanding that the local judiciary more closely reflect the political landscape of the citizens of Madison County. “It really is hard to believe that in a county where Republicans are in the majority less than 10% of the judges are Republicans,” said GOP Chairman Jeremy Plank.

The Third Judicial Circuit has 13 Associate Judges and nine Circuit judges. Associates are elected in a secret ballot by the Circuit judges, while Circuit judges are elected by the citizens of the county to six year terms. Associate judges serve four year terms after which they can be reappointed by the Circuit judges or be removed by them in another secret vote. Associate openings can also occur for other reasons due to retirements or career changes etc. Recently one Associate Judge, Luther Simmons, left the bench to join the staff of Simmons Hanley Conroy, one of the most prominent personal injury law firms in the United States that is headquartered in Madison County. Another Associate judge, Don Flack, resigned a few weeks later to take a job at the firm of Armstrong Teasdale in St. Louis. Luther Simmons was recently replaced by the appointment of attorney Ryan Jumper, who came to the bench directly from a personal injury firm headed by longtime Democratic attorney Lance Callis. Although not yet announced, a majority of the Circuit Judges have reportedly filled the Flack vacancy with local plaintiff’s attorney Ron Foster, who also serves as Chairman of the Edwardsville Township Democrats.

Less than three years ago, five Associate judge openings occurred simultaneously when the nine Circuit Judges refused to reappoint five of the 13 Associate judges to a new term. Nearly 50 candidates, including several highly respected Republican lawyers, applied for the vacancies. No Republican was chosen for any of those five openings. “If

our county is going to shake its reputation as a judicial hellhole the judiciary needs more balance. Two Republican judges out of 22 total does not reflect the political makeup of a county with a Republican majority,” said Plank.

“I find it troubling that Republican applicants for Associate judge have been passed over now 16 times in a row, with only two appointments in the past 23 years and none in the past 12 years,” said Plank. “It seems that nearly all of the Associate judges appointed in the past 12 years have come from either the State’s Attorney’s office or one of the local plaintiff’s firms owned by wealthy democrat attorneys. Republicans are simply underrepresented on the bench in Madison County and our elected Circuit judges need to use these vacancies to show the electorate that they value balance in the judiciary and want to improve the image of our court system.”