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POLITICS

Lippman Will Be Chief Judge, Senate Will Look Into Process

BY JIMMY VIELKIND | 4:17 PM JANUARY 13, 2009 | TAGS: POLITICS



ALBANY—Democrats in the State Senate announced they will hold hearings into the judicial nominee selection process as The New York Times reported that David Paterson will name Jonathan Lippman to replace Judith Kaye as chief judge of the Court of Appeals.

Lippman would be the first chief judge appointee in over 100 years to not have already been serving on the court, meaning his promotion will not create another vacancy for Paterson to fill. (He might be a little appointment-weary right now.)

There was some speculation that Paterson, who made a big deal about the lack of diversity among the nominees, might elevate one of the associate justices--Theodore Jones or Eugene Piggott--leaving a vacancy he could have filled from a more diverse slate.

Here is a full press release from State Senator John Sampson, the new chairman of the Judiciary Committee:

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.

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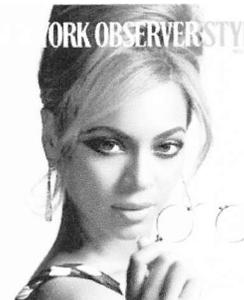
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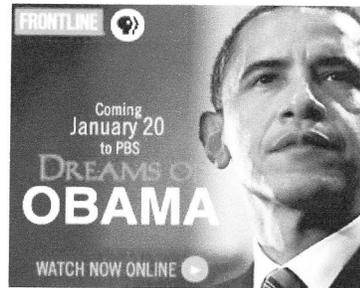
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