

From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 8:53 AM
To: 'swatson@buffnews.com'
Cc: 'abesecker@buffnews.com'

Subject: **Overlooked? -- HEADS UPI -- The Erie County Bar Association's Oct 22nd press release announcing its "Qualified" rating of Assemblyman Michael Norris to be a Supreme Court Justice**

TO: [Buffalo News Reporter Stephen Watson](#)

Bar association ratings of judicial candidates are NO safeguard against unfit judicial candidates. They, like judicial cross-endorsements, are frauds upon the public – and the Erie County Bar Association’s “Qualified” rating of Assemblyman Michael is the latest proof, reflected by my below October 27th e-mail to you – and reinforced by the Erie Bar Association’s [October 28th response](#).

Notably, your yesterday’s “Editor’s Pick” article "[Family Court race is rare, contested election in Erie County](#)", with reporter [Aaron Besecker](#), does NO independent investigation of the qualifications of the three Family Court candidates on the ballot, including whether they have been the subject of complaints to the Attorney Grievance Committee, the Commission on Judicial Conduct, or of lawsuits based on their professional performance -- and ultimately relies on the candidates’ bar ratings. As to these, you state, seemingly about the Erie County Bar Association, “The association does not comment on individual ratings”. Why shouldn’t the Erie County Bar Association – and other bar groups – defend their bald ratings, if they are defensible? Who are the bar lawyers who have reviewed the candidates’ qualifications? Did they disclose and disqualify themselves for conflicts of interest? What investigations did they do? Do you have a copy, in blank, of the written questionnaires they required the candidates to fill out? Why shouldn’t the candidates’ answers be publicly-available, redacted with respect to matters that are confidential.

Let’s have a conversation about this. **There must be investigative reporting of what is going on with respect to uncontested and contested judicial races – and appointive judgeships – as there is a complete breakdown of ALL safeguards, at ALL levels, and I can prove it, readily.**

Please call me, as immediately as possible – or advise when I can expect your call.

Thank you.

Elena Sassower, Director
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From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 1:16 PM
To: 'swatson@buffnews.com' <swatson@buffnews.com>

Subject: HEADS UPI -- The Erie County Bar Association's Oct 22nd press release announcing its "Qualified" rating of Assemblyman Michael Norris to be a Supreme Court Justice

TO: [Buffalo News Reporter Stephen Watson](#)

Your September 1st article "["Completely undemocratic": Once again, WNY voters lack choice in state judge races](#)" stated "The Erie County Bar Association issues nonpartisan ratings for judicial candidates", but that Michael Norris was "not yet rated".

Below is my e-mail, just sent, to the Erie County Bar Association about its October 22nd press release announcing the rating.

Thank you.

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From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>

Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 1:05 PM

To: 'anoble@eriebar.org' <anoble@eriebar.org>

Cc: 'jph@harringtonmahoney.com' <jph@harringtonmahoney.com>; 'dkillelea@gilmourkillelea.com' <dkillelea@gilmourkillelea.com>; 'skohlbacher@eriebar.org' <skohlbacher@eriebar.org>; 'sbelasik@eriebar.org' <sbelasik@eriebar.org>

Subject: The Erie County Bar Association's Oct 22nd press release announcing its "Qualified" rating of Assemblyman Michael Norris to be a Supreme Court Justice

TO: [Erie County Bar Association Executive Director Anne Noble](#)

I have just discovered, on the [Erie County Bar Association's website](#), its [October 22nd press release](#) of "Additional Ratings for Judicial Candidates", whose only difference from its [July 23rd press release](#) of ratings for four Supreme Court justice candidates, for four seats, is that Robert Richardson is replaced by Michael Norris.

Assemblyman Norris' "Qualified" rating is notwithstanding the phone conversation we had together on September 23rd, summarized by my below September 24th e-mail to you, stating:

"As discussed, [Assemblyman Norris](#), a member of the Assembly's Judiciary Committee, Ways and Means Committee, Rules Committee, and Election Law Committee, has corrupted his office to advance himself politically and enrich himself financially – and this

is the subject of fully-documented criminal and ethics complaints I filed against him and his fellow legislators – and of lawsuits against them, two of which are LIVE, both encompassing the lawsuit commenced in September 2016, which spanned Assemblyman Norris' first three years in office. The webpage I created on CJA's website, www.judgewatch.org, pertaining to Assemblyman Norris and posting my e-mails to him, and which I showed you, is accessible from the prominent homepage link "[ELECTIONS 2004: Cleaning Up NY's Corrupt & Unconstitutional State Governance – starting with its most important D.A. race: Albany County](#)" – via its link for [Supreme Court and other judicial races](#). The direct link is here: <https://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/elections/2024/norris-michael.htm>."

On October 1st, in response to this e-mail, I received a phone call from Judiciary Committee Vice Chair Harrington, with whom I spoke for nearly an hour about Norris' corruption in office, disqualifying him from ANY office of public trust and mandating his indictment for corruption of constitutional, lawful state governance, including pertaining to his own larcenous legislative salary – and the salary he expects to be paid as a Supreme Court justice – and for which he would be indicted by the re-election-seeking D.A.s of Erie and Niagara Counties with current geographic jurisdiction over him as an assemblymember, were it not for the fact that they themselves are beneficiaries of larcenous D.A. salaries. And, were these D.A.s not also beneficiaries of backroom political deals, they would be investigating the backroom deal that gave Assemblyman Norris a cross-endorsed candidacy for Supreme Court and slipped in his chief of staff to run for his Assembly seat. As I told Mr. Harrington, these machinations, subverting elections and process, are a *modus operandi* in Erie and Niagara Counties and throughout the state precisely because of legislators like Norris, a member of the Assembly Election Law Committee.

Mr. Harrington cc'd Judiciary Chair Killelea, Assistant Executive Director Kohlbacher, and you on his [October 2nd e-mail to me](#), which I did not see until [October 19th, when I responded](#), with cc's to all, reiterating that "CJA's webpage pertaining to Assemblyman Norris' corruption as an assembly member – covered up by the D.A.s, New York's other corrupted 'public protection' entities, & the courts, is [here](#)."

The Bar Association's October 22nd press release furnishes no details as to the basis of Assemblyman Norris' "Qualified" ratings. It states however, under the heading "**The Judiciary Committee is nonpartisan**", that "Ratings are done by a committee of 29 lawyers" and, under the heading "**Criteria and Process are Comprehensive**", that "Judicial candidates are evaluated on criteria necessary to hold judicial office, including integrity...and knowledge of the law. Judicial candidates are asked to complete a written questionnaire and are also interviewed as part of a multi-faceted rating process. ..."

Inasmuch as the ONLY rating possible for Assemblyman Norris, based on the open-and-shut, primary-source, documentary evidence I furnished, was "Not Recommended" – indeed such evidence mandated that the Bar refer him to ethics and criminal authorities pursuant to [Rule 8.3 of New York's Rules of Professional Conduct](#) -- please confirm that my e-mail(s) and the webpage were furnished and reviewed by the "committee of 29 lawyers" and advise as to what findings of fact and conclusions of law were made with respect thereto and whether Assemblyman Norris was questioned about it – and what his response was.

Finally, I reiterate my request for the names of the Committee's members – other than Chair Killelea and Vice Chair Harrington, whose names and titles I found on [the Bar's website for the Judiciary Committee](#) – and I additionally reiterate my request for the Committee's rules and procedures, including a blank copy

of the questionnaire that Assemblyman Norris was required to complete – information I requested by my below September 24th e-mail and which its “Qualified” rating of him makes all the more imperative.

Thank you.

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From: Center for Judicial Accountability, Inc. (CJA) <elena@judgewatch.org>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 10:14 AM
To: 'anoble@eriebar.org' <anoble@eriebar.org>

Subject: Erie County Bar Association's screening & evaluation of the qualifications of Assemblyman Michael Norris to be a Supreme Court Justice

TO: [Erie County Bar Association Executive Director Anne Noble](#)

Thank you for calling me bright and early yesterday morning, at 8:30 a.m., in response to the two phone messages I left early Friday afternoon – as to which Alicia Quebral, Director of Continuing Legal Education, had called me back to say that you were out of the office, but would call me on Monday.

As yet, I have received no call or e-mail from the chair or any member of the bar association’s judicial screening committee reviewing the qualifications of Assemblyman Michael Norris for the Supreme Court judgeship that the Democratic, Republican, and Conservative parties of the 8th Judicial District bestowed upon him, [nearly six weeks ago, by an uncontested cross-endorsement](#).

I again reiterate my request for the names of the chair and members of the Erie County Bar Association’s judicial screening committee and for their rules and procedures for screening judicial candidates – information you declined to give me. If there is a judicial screening questionnaire that is used, I request a copy, in blank. Typically, such questionnaires inquire whether the candidate, to his knowledge, has been the subject of complaints and of lawsuits pertaining to his professional duties.

As discussed, [Assemblyman Norris](#), a member of the Assembly’s Judiciary Committee, Ways and Means Committee, Rules Committee, and Election Law Committee, has corrupted his office to advance himself politically and enrich himself financially – and this is the subject of fully-documented criminal and ethics complaints I filed against him and his fellow legislators – and of lawsuits against them, two of which are LIVE, both encompassing the lawsuit commenced in September 2016, which spanned Assemblyman Norris’ first three years in office. The webpage I created on CJA’s website, www.judgewatch.org, pertaining to Assemblyman Norris and posting my e-mails to him, and which I showed you, is accessible from the prominent homepage link “[ELECTIONS 2004: Cleaning Up NY’s Corrupt & Unconstitutional State Governance – starting with its most important D.A. race: Albany County](#)” – via its link for [Supreme Court and other judicial races](#). The direct link is here: <https://www.judgewatch.org/web-pages/elections/2024/norris-michael.htm>.

I expect the judicial screening committee will have many questions for me – and I am available to answer them, including under oath.

Thank you.

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