



Top Judicial Races
Texas Civil Justice League PAC
2020 Primary Runoff Edition
Runoff Date July 14, 2020
Early Voting Begins June 29, 2020

June 5, 2020

The 2018 election resulted in a catastrophic wipeout of nearly two centuries of judicial experience on the intermediate courts of appeals. It likewise witnessed the defeat of dozens of experienced trial court judges, particularly in Dallas and Harris counties. With the elimination of straight ticket voting for the 2020 election and beyond, the circumstances have changed but no one is quite sure of how or to what extent. Presidential election years attract substantially higher voter turnout than mid-term elections, casting further uncertainty regarding the impact of removal of the straight ticket. The good news, if we can call it that, is that there are fewer appellate judicial offices on the ballot this year, offering an opportunity to concentrate resources on a relatively small number of critical races. We should also consider whether an independent effort aimed at informing voters of the importance of judicial elections and of staying with the ballot may be necessary to maximize our prospects.

TCJL endorsed in 11 appellate court races in the March primary, the outcome of which could make the difference between the further erosion of judicial experience on our courts and the stabilization of the appellate courts in the wake of the 2018 disaster. TCJL has identified three runoff races that warrant support.

Intermediate Appellate Courts

Terry Adams (First Court of Appeals – Place 5): In this Republican run off to succeed retiring Justice Laura Carter Higley, TCJL favors Terry Adams. Adams has 30 years experience as a civil appellate attorney appearing before state and federal courts, including the US Supreme Court. James Lombardino is a former family court district judge and assistant district attorney with a great deal of trial court experience. Adams led the 4-way primary field with 32.5% of the vote and earned more votes in the state bar poll than Judge Lombardino. The winner of the Republican runoff faces Democrat Amparo Guerra in November.

Scott Golemon (Ninth Court of Appeals – Chief Justice): In this Republican runoff to succeed retiring Chief Justice Steve McKeithen, TCJL favors Conroe civil litigation specialist Scott Golemon. There is no Democrat in the race, so the winner of this runoff will win the seat. Opponent Jay Wright is a former Assistant Nueces County Attorney who headed the office's Civil and Criminal Divisions at different times. Golemon has tried over 300 cases to a jury and also has family and criminal law experience. . In the five-way primary, Golemon and Wright finished only 60 votes apart and were only 2 votes apart in the recent state bar poll. Golemon possesses the best combination of practice experience to be an effective and productive chief justice of a court that, among other things, has played a central role in developing the law of eminent domain in Texas.

Lawrence M. Doss* (Seventh Court of Appeals – Place 4): TCJL endorses incumbent Justice Larry Doss, who is running for a full term after his appointment to the Amarillo Court of Appeals last fall. A native of Abilene, Justice Doss clerked for U.S. District Judge Sam Cummings in Lubbock before joining the Lubbock-based law firm of Mullin Hoard & Brown. A board-certified civil appellate specialist, Justice Doss has 20 years of experience in both state and federal courts and has authored numerous *amicus curiae* briefs on behalf of the Texas Association of Defense Counsel. His opponent, Steven Denny, is a 15-year criminal defense attorney who served for five years as an Assistant District Attorney for Potter and Armstrong counties. This was a two-way race in March, but it was invalidated because the race was omitted from two counties. In appointing Justice Doss to the appellate bench, Governor Greg Abbott selected the most qualified and experienced lawyer for the job. TCJL agrees.