

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Andrew Prazuch
andrewp@kcba.org
206-267-7061



Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

Bar Group Finds Misleading Judicial Campaign Materials

SEATTLE, Washington (August 14, 2008) - The King County Bar Association today found that materials produced by the Campaign to Elect Judge Jean Rietschel were ambiguous and possibly misleading to voters who might assume she is an incumbent Superior Court Judge.

"The Association believes that the printed materials produced by the Campaign did not sufficiently identify Judge Rietschel as a Municipal Court Judge, and violated a pledge signed by the judge on June 12," said Andrew Prazuch, KCBA Executive Director. "We do note, however, that Judge Rietschel has taken acceptable steps to change the wording on her signage so that it adheres to the pledge. Her signage now more clearly identifies her current judicial position, as called for in KCBA's campaign guidelines."

Judge Rietschel, who was found exceptionally well qualified to serve as a Superior Court judge by the bar, is running for an open seat on the court against two opponents.

KCBA issued today's finding after receiving a public complaint about the original signage on August 1. The bar chose to act quickly on the complaint due to the imminent August 19 primary election, since it is possible the race will be decided by the primary and not continue on into the general election in November.

Because preserving the integrity of the judicial office is vital if public respect for the law and the courts is also to be preserved, the bar monitors judicial elections that take place in whole or in part in King County and responds to complaints of unfair judicial campaign practices in those elections. The bar asks candidates to sign a pledge to fairly campaign so that contests for judicial office do not impair public confidence in the integrity and objectivity of the judicial process. Unfair or potentially deceptive campaign conduct by judicial candidates can quickly undermine public confidence in the courts unless the public is certain that such conduct will not be tolerated.

Founded in 1886, the King County Bar Association is the largest voluntary bar association in the state of Washington, with over 5,000 members. As part of its mission it works with the judiciary to promote a just, collegial, and accessible legal system and profession, and to achieve excellence in the administration of justice.

###