



Senator  
**Bill Stouffer**

**DISTRICT 21**

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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## The Stouffer Report: Judges Will Also Be on Your November Ballot

Of all the people and issues you will vote on in November, quite possibly the most important is one you hear almost nothing about.

After voting on the candidates and issues, you will see a list of judges on your ballot. Most circuit and appeals court judges will be up for retention this year. In addition, you will see a question asking if you wish to keep a Missouri Supreme Court judge on the job. Judge Patricia Breckenridge, like all of the justices, is nonpartisan. After a Supreme Court justice has served for a year, his or her name then goes onto a general election ballot and must receive a majority of votes to be retained. This is included in the state's method of choosing judges.

The [Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan](#), more often called the Missouri Plan, was placed on the ballot and passed by voters in 1940. At first, the nonpartisan plan applied to the Supreme Court, court of appeals, and certain courts in St. Louis and Jackson County. Since then, the plan has been expanded to Clay, Platte, and St. Louis counties. All of those changes took effect in the 1970s.

Under the Missouri Plan, the [Appellate Judicial Commission](#) chooses a list of candidates to replace a Supreme Court justice. This panel is made up of three lawyers, three citizens, and the chief justice — who serves as chair. The Appellate Judicial Commission then reviews applications of those who apply for the job and then turn those names over to the governor, who then has 60 days to make a selection. If he does not choose anyone, the commission will then make the selection.

[The Federalist Society](#) took the lead last year on finding more fair alternatives to the Missouri Plan. There are other groups who also would like to see the nonpartisan court plan changed or even done

away with. Bill Placke leads the St. Louis chapter of the Federalist Society. He says he would prefer a ten-member commission that then would give the governor a panel of five people to choose from.

Judge Breckenridge was named by the governor last year. You can see her entire [bio](#) online, but here is a bit of it:

#### **Dates of judicial service:**

- Appointed to Supreme Court in September 2007; will stand for a retention at the November 2008 general election.
- Previously served as a judge on the Missouri Court of Appeals, Western District, from 1990 to 2007; retained in the general elections in November 1992 and 2004. Served as its chief judge from 1998 to 2000.
- Appointed and later elected as an Associate Judge in Vernon County, 28th Judicial Circuit, in 1982; re-elected in 1986 and 1990
- Assistant Municipal Judge, City of Nevada, Missouri, 1979-1982

#### **Education:**

- Juris Doctorate, University of Missouri-Columbia
- Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1975
- University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1972
- Educated in the Nevada, Missouri, public school district

#### **Prior Employment**

- Partner in law firm of Russell, Brown, Bickel and Breckenridge, 1980-1982
- Associate in law firm of Russell, Brown and Bickel, 1978-1980

We keep hearing how this will be the most important election in our lifetimes, and it may be true. To me, all elections are important, so I hope you exercise your right and vote on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

*Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.*

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue,

please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at  
bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

**Contact Information**

**Capitol Office**  
State Capitol  
Room 332  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Website:**  
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/stouffer>

**Toll-Free Phone Number:**  
866.768.3987

**Phone Number:**  
573.751.1507  
**Fax:**  
573.751.9764

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