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February 3, 2005

Representative Kathy Haigh, Chair  
State Government Operations and Accountability Committee  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Representative Haigh:

The Board of Trustees of the King County Bar Association unanimously supports Section 2 of House Bill 1226, which would set limits on contributions to the campaigns of candidates for the Superior Court, the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

In 1996, the Washington Supreme Court's Walsh Commission strongly recommended that there should be "limits on campaign contributions by persons or organizations and aggregate limits on expenditures by a judicial candidate's campaign committee." Walsh Commission Report, p. 45 (1996). A state judge who was quoted in the Walsh Commission Report voiced the issue eloquently:

I think we have to be very careful to maintain a certain degree of judicial independence where a judge doesn't always have to be looking over his or her shoulder at the political wind that's blowing with regard to each decision – or perhaps be forced into rendering a political decision rather than a decision of justice.

*Id.*, at 44. Section 2 of House Bill 1226 goes far to make real what the Walsh Commission recommended nine years ago.

Judicial campaign contribution limits have been codified in the vast majority of States in which judges are elected. There is no question that judicial campaign contribution limits will help to: (1) preserve the nonpartisan nature of our judicial elections; (2) preserve public confidence in our judicial election system; and (3) prevent well-funded special interest groups from dominating judicial elections in our state. Thank you for your consideration of this most important measure.

Very truly yours,

John M. Cary  
President

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