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## Bar Endorsement of Judicial Candidates

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## BAR ENDORSEMENT OF JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

The Hammond and Gary Bar Associations recently conducted an interesting experiment as to judicial candidates in connection with the May primary election that may be of interest to the Bar of Indiana.

For many years there have been few changes of judges in the five superior courts of Lake County, but due to the political change in 1930 and 1932, and the withdrawal from the primary race of two of the sitting judges, there were twenty-eight candidates in the two parties for nomination for the five superior court judgeships in the May primaries.

As is always the case, some of these men were well qualified for the position they sought, and others were not so well qualified. The two Bar Associations realized that there was grave danger that the high standard of the superior courts of Lake County heretofore maintained would be lowered by the selection of unqualified candidates at the primary. In order to prevent this, if possible, and advise the public as to who were qualified and who were unqualified, the two Bar Associations agreed to send a secret questionnaire to each attorney in Lake County asking him to rate each candidate, regardless of party, on the basis of his legal ability, judicial temperament, integrity and reputation as highly qualified, qualified or unqualified. Some objection was made to this plan by a few attorneys, chiefly on the ground that the people do not trust lawyers, and would repudiate the lawyers' choice by their vote in the primary election. The plan carried, however, in the Hammond and Gary Bar Associations, and the questionnaires were sent to each lawyer in the county to be marked and returned unsigned to a joint committee of the two Bar Associations composed of members of both political parties.

Three hundred forty-one questionnaires were sent out and two hundred sixty-two questionnaires were marked by the attorneys of Lake County and returned to the committee. Every precaution was taken to assure a fair and unprejudiced expression of the attorneys of the county on each of the candidates. The candidates were listed alphabetically under the number of the room for which they were candidates regardless of political parties, and no party designations were placed on the questionnaires. The questionnaires marked by the attorneys and returned to the committee were then tabulated without regard to

political parties or personal feelings, and the number of marks each candidate received in each of the three classifications, that is, "highly qualified," "qualified" or "unqualified" were published in all of the newspapers of the county over the names of the committee in charge. It was clear to the tabulating committee that the members of the Bar, as a rule, had made an honest attempt to fairly mark the candidates without regard to party or prejudice. Occasionally a questionnaire was found where the marker had clearly voted his ballot along party lines, but those were rare. Three of the present judges with outstanding records led the poll, and for the other positions, lawyers of high standing led the poll.

Following this vote of the lawyers, and the publicity given to it, the results of the primary election are interesting. The best qualified candidates in each party for each court, as indicated by the Bar Association poll, led the field and was nominated in the primary election. In one case two candidates in one party primary received an almost equal endorsement by the Bar Association poll, and in the primary these two candidates were only a few votes apart. The majority of the Bar Associations, at least, believe that this poll did more than merely predict the results of the primary election. They believe that the results of the Bar poll clearly influenced the selection of well-qualified candidates by each party, and whatever the result may be in the fall election, the high standing of the judiciary of the county will not be impaired.

OSCAR HANEY.

Hammond, Ind.