

# **Justice Judy Cates Talks about Access to the Courts Despite the COVID Crackdown**

## **Cates Planning Virtual or In-Person Candidate Forums**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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With the re-opening of southern Illinois, Judge Judy Cates'<sup>1</sup> campaign for the Illinois Supreme Court will get into "full swing" again. "Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, our campaign was going strong, right up to the March 17th primary on St. Patrick's Day," said Cates.

Like everything else, Judge Judy's campaign became upended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the closing of schools and other "non-essential" businesses, Justice Cates' focus shifted away from the campaign. Her first priority was to keep her family safe and make sure people recognized the serious health consequences of exposure to this deadly coronavirus. She also took the time to learn more about the science of this new enemy.

"I became really concerned about our southern Illinois economy. Along with the closure of businesses, many courthouses delayed cases, stranding litigants into uncertainty. But the appellate courthouse in Mt. Vernon, where Justice Cates sits as an appellate court judge, did not close. "The judges, however, were not able to convene at the courthouse, and I was concerned about the people who were waiting on their cases to be heard. As an Appellate Court Justice, I believe we needed our cases moving ahead with oral argument," Cates added.

"I worked with the Clerk of the 5<sup>th</sup> District Appellate Court, his staff, and the two justices involved in a case to be held in April. I felt that we needed to test out video conferencing as a method to get our court open to oral arguments." On April 30th, the 5<sup>th</sup> District Appellate Court was the first Appellate Court in Illinois to hold an oral argument using video conferencing. Justice Cates was on the three-judge panel for that argument, and because of its success, there will be more oral arguments held in early June using video conferencing.

Justice Cates has also been concerned with the number of businesses that have had to close and the number of workers being laid off as a result of the controversial "shelter-in-place" order. "The people of southern Illinois are proud individuals. I have spent all of my life in southern Illinois and had so many clients throughout the District when I was a practicing lawyer. Even in

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<sup>1</sup> Justice Judy Cates is a candidate for the Illinois Supreme Court and is presently a judge on the 5<sup>th</sup> District Appellate Court.

the darkest of times, I am confident that we can work together to give one another a hand up,” said Cates.

Like other disasters in the past, such as the Great Flood of 1993, Justice Cates remains confident that the determination of southern Illinoisans will get the region through this latest challenge. Justice Cates believes the best use of her campaign now is to thank the many people throughout the 37-county District for their courageous efforts to do what was necessary to keep our community safe, educate our children, keep vital centers, such as hospitals and nursing homes open, feed our community by keeping grocery stores open, and more. Most recently, Justice Cates sent notes of thanks to volunteers in southern Illinois who were making masks out of old operating room curtains. “We have real ‘heroes’ in southern Illinois,” said Cates.

Prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, Justice Cates was supporting southern Illinois by attending as many community events as she could, including a fundraiser for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southern Illinois, the Women’s Center’s fundraiser, the 99th Marion Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Banquet, and Trivia Night for St. Anthony’s Memorial Hospital in Effingham. (The “Judge Judy for Supreme Court” team won that contest!)

In the short term, the campaign will continue to thank those people of the 5<sup>th</sup> District who are making a difference. You can learn more about those efforts on the “Judge Judy For Illinois Supreme Court” Facebook page. “I am personally making contributions to food banks and trying to help, while social distancing. We will be at the Community Care Center in Granite City the first week of June – still trying to help so many in need,” Cates said.

With all that is going on, very few people are thinking about a Supreme Court race. But this Supreme Court seat is one of the most important decisions that the people of southern Illinois will make on Election Day. “I have been and will continue, to fight for access to justice for ALL of the people of southern Illinois, and keep our courts open for the people who need them. To get that done, I am on a Supreme Court subcommittee created for the purpose of Access to Justice in our Appellate Courts,” Cates added.

And because this Supreme Court race is so important, Justice Cates looks forward to upcoming political forums with her opponent. Judge Judy is going to challenge her opponent to appear in virtual forums so that ALL of the people can ask questions and decide how they will vote. “I believe the voters need to be able to ask questions of the judicial candidates and get answers, even when these events are conducted in a virtual forum. I am eager to discuss the issues that matter most to the good people of southern Illinois and why “Judge Judy” Cates needs to be the next Illinois Supreme Court justice. The Illinois Appellate Lawyers Association is already working on providing a virtual candidate forum, which I have agreed to attend,” said Cates. “The judiciary needs to be transparent, and access to fair justice has to be available for ALL the people. Politics has entered the courts in too many places and has threatened the impartiality of the judiciary. I look forward to a robust discussion of this and many more issues with my opponent,” Cates added.

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