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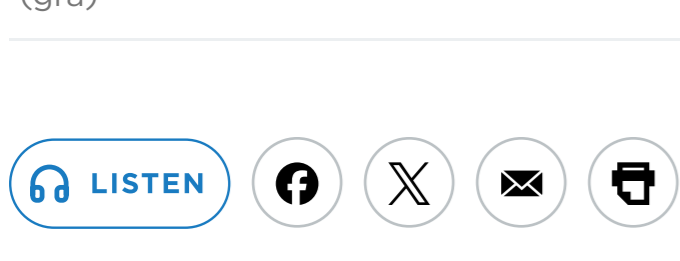
OPINION

We recommend in the race for Texas Supreme Court Place 4

Democrat Christine Vinh Weems takes on GOP incumbent John Devine.

By Dallas Morning News Editorial

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We recommend Democrat Christine Vinh Weems over GOP incumbent John Devine in this contest for the Place 4 seat on the Texas Supreme Court.

Weems, who serves on the 281st Civil District Court in Harris County, is certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in personal injury trial law and civil trial law, and she has taught trial advocacy at the University of Houston Law Center.

More importantly, Weems, 48, has drawn respect from lawyers, receiving strong scores for courtroom demeanor, preparedness, timely rulings and impartiality in a recent Houston Bar Association judicial evaluation poll. Weems drew public attention when she granted a temporary restraining order in a case to allow abortions to continue based on due process, an order that the current Texas Supreme Court stayed. Despite the outcome, she stands by her legal reasoning as an example of her principled effort to clarify an unclear area of the law.

2024 FALL GENERAL ELECTION

Candidates for Texas Justice, Supreme Court - Place 4

John Devine, Republican profile card

Christine Vinh Weems, Democrat profile card

Compare the candidates' answers to our questions in our Voter Guide.

Opinion

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Devine gives us pause based on years as a divisive and controversial figure in the Texas judiciary. Previously, he served seven years as judge of the state 190th District Court in Harris County and nine years as an appointed special judge for the Harris County justice of the peace courts. He didn't fill out our Voter Guide questionnaire or participate in our candidate interview.

Most jurists attempt to avoid appearances of personal opinions impacting their deliberations. Devine's religious beliefs seem to significantly influence his judicial decisions, or at the very least, uncomfortably dissolve the appearance of impartiality.

He had called church-state separation a "myth" that has undercut Christian roots and claimed that Texas' all-GOP Court of Criminal Appeals — which ruled that Attorney General Ken Paxton's office could not unilaterally prosecute local voting crimes — is controlled by "RINOs," or Republicans in name only, and "trans-Republicans."

Devine also has had intemperate words for Democratic leaders in Harris County, accusing some of trying to "bastardize our election code" to steal elections. Devine has been widely criticized for missing 60% of recent Supreme Court oral arguments, raising questions about his work ethic.

Ideally, the Supreme Court is about calling balls and strikes on procedure and constitutionality, but our concern is that Devine goes beyond this to embrace inappropriate political activism. Texas is owed an adherence to constitutional principles that doesn't place politics above consistent legal reasoning based on precedents and predictable application of the law.

In this contest, Weems is the better choice.

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