

Merit Selection for Magistrates to be the same as Merit Selection of Judges

OCG has long supported having magistrates go through the same vetting process as for judges. Magistrates do much of the same work as judges, doing arraignments, motions and sentencing in uncontested cases, and have salaries comparable to judges.

The public concern is that magistrate appointments have been political appointments. There is a long list of such appointments that it is not necessary to list here. We all know who they are. Maybe they were the best qualified for the positions, but we will never know. Maybe they themselves would like to know they received the position on merit, not on political connections.

Since the passage by the voters of “Merit Selection” for judicial appointments in 1994, the number of magistrates has grown from 2 to 21. It appears to be an end run around the selection process of judges.

It is time for these highly paid magistrates, with judicial duties, to go through the same rigorous process as for judges.

The General Assembly needs to clear this cloud from the magistrate appointment process.