

SAM WRIGHT

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Commonwealth Policy Center
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Dear 7th Supreme Court District Voters,

My name is Sam Wright and I've proudly served as your Justice on the Supreme Court of Kentucky since you elected me in 2015. I'm seeking reelection—and I need your help. I am the only candidate running for Justice of the 7th Supreme Court District with experience as an appellate court judge. My experience as YOUR voice on the Supreme Court since 2015 is invaluable. I am ready to carry that experience forward into a new term representing our Kentucky values.

I'd like to share a little about myself with you. First, I want you to know that my family and Christian faith are the cornerstones of my life. My grandfather was a preacher and church was an integral part of my upbringing. I still attend the church I was raised in. I became a member of that church when I was in high school—and married my college sweetheart, Jennifer, there. Jennifer and I have two sons, Samuel Tilden IV (who studies computer programming) and John Alexander (a wildlife biologist).

I was born and raised in the mountains of Letcher County. My dad, S.T. Wright, Jr., was a probation and parole officer, and my mom, Gladys Hall (originally of Floyd County), ran a country store. My sister, Tammie, and I were raised in an apartment in the back of that small family business. While in high school, I worked evenings and weekends in the store.

After graduating high school, I attended Hazard Community College, where I obtained an Associate's Degree. I then graduated from the University of Kentucky with a Bachelor's Degree in 1978. While in college, I worked summers at a coal tippie. This first-hand experience gave me an appreciation of the coal industry—not just as a vital part of the region's economy, but for the *individuals* working in the coal industry as well.

After college, I stayed in Lexington to attend the University of Kentucky College of Law, where I obtained my Juris Doctor degree in 1981. I always knew the

mountains were my home. I came back to eastern Kentucky in 1982 and joined the law firm of Cook and Wright. In 1989, I opened my own law practice.

After practicing law in the mountains of eastern Kentucky for a decade, I was elected District Judge in 1992. Beginning in 1993, I was elected to four consecutive terms as Judge of the 47th Judicial Circuit Court. When I took over as Circuit Judge, the court had the worst backlog of cases in the state. I eliminated the backlog and transformed the court into one of the most efficient in the state.

As a circuit judge, I established the first Parent Education Clinic in Kentucky east of Interstate 75 and only the third in the state. Its purpose was to reduce the harm children suffer in divorces. In 2004, I obtained a grant to start a Drug Court to help individuals with criminal convictions recover from addiction. God's grace and second chances are central to my firmly-held Christian convictions. Drug Court extends grace and second chances to people willing to work for them—all while making our communities safer. Studies found that in the 2 years after graduation, none of my drug court graduates were convicted of a felony and only 9% were convicted of a misdemeanor, while 59% of those sent to prison or probation would be convicted again within the same time period. The Letcher County Fiscal Court unanimously passed a resolution describing the results achieved by my Drug Court as “*amazingly successful.*”

After a twenty-three-year career as a trial judge, I was elected to the Supreme Court in November 2015. Later that month, I took the oath of office on the Letcher County Courthouse steps. It has been an honor and privilege to represent our region on the Supreme Court. During my tenure, the Court has faced many of the most momentous legal issues in recent history. In one of those cases, we ruled that the state could close a Lexington abortion clinic. In another, I wrote a dissent disagreeing when the majority of the justices ruled that a prisoner taking a police car during his escape and abandoning it on a strip mine road was not theft. Two other justices joined my dissenting opinion, so the decision was decided by a 4-3 vote. Opinions of the Court are often decided by such slim margins. I have been representing your values since 2015 and would appreciate your support so that I may continue to do so. Those are only a couple of the contentious issues I have considered in my time on the Court. I have carefully considered every case before the Court and followed the Constitution in my rulings, while also respecting the values I share with you, the voters.

In my twenty-eight years as a judge, I have always kept the role of the judiciary in the forefront of my mind. Judges should interpret laws according to their clear text. When the meaning of a word or concept must be interpreted by the courts, historical context and meaning are vital and must be followed. In the oath I took as a judge, I swore I would “support the Constitution . . . and

faithfully execute . . . the office according to law.” A sacred oath is something you live by. The courts are the safeguard of your rights and freedoms—ALL your rights—including your freedoms of speech and religion under the First Amendment and your Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms.

Many of you may be familiar with Supreme Court of the United States Justice Antonin Scalia. Justice Scalia most reflects my judicial philosophy. As I do, Justice Scalia followed the text in a reasonable manner in interpreting the law. Our nation’s Founding Fathers established our three-branch system of government. Our judiciary must not overstep its bounds. If, instead of the text, judges base interpretations on the “spirit” of the law, they can say almost anything. That is *not* the power granted the judiciary. I have a deep and thorough respect for those limits.

I am asking for your vote. I will continue supporting the Constitution and our values from the bench. I leave you with this final note: I am recommended by the Kentucky Right to Life—a testament to my values based upon my almost-thirty-year judicial career.

God bless you and yours, God bless our Commonwealth, and God bless America!

Sincerely yours,

Sam Wright

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