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CONTACT:
Dan Fee
215-704-3160

INQUIRER ENDORSES SETH WILLIAMS FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Paper Cites his "Know How" and Plans to Make City Safer

PHILADELPHIA: Seth Williams was endorsed for District Attorney today by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The paper cited Seth's experience and plans for the future is deciding that "A fair and impartial D.A. with good ethics is needed. Among this deep field, the best candidate is Seth Williams."

The entire editorial is below.

"Editorial: Williams for D.A.

Next to the job of mayor, Philadelphia district attorney is the most important elected office in the city.

The district attorney manages a staff of 300 lawyers and a \$30 million budget, in a criminal-justice system that handles more than 1,000 cases per week. In a city plagued by gun violence, the job is critical to public safety and quality of life.

Lynne M. Abraham chose not to run this year for the job she's held since 1991. Five Democrats, all of whom have served as assistant D.A.s, are vying for the job in the May 19 primary.

The *Inquirer's* endorsement goes to SETH WILLIAMS, who came close to defeating Abraham four years ago.

Williams, 42, worked for more than 10 years as an assistant district attorney under Abraham and is the only candidate with experience managing in the D.A.'s office. He also served as the city's inspector general for two years under Mayor John Street.

Williams has the know-how to improve the D.A.'s office and a good grasp of strategies to make neighborhoods safer places to live. He would attack the prevalence of guns in the city with a "holistic" approach, including more aggressive targeting of illegal straw purchasers and working with community groups to dissuade young men from the gun culture.

The city's police union has endorsed Williams - a strong and telling vote of confidence.

To limit the large number of cases that now get dismissed, Williams would assign teams of assistant district attorneys to neighborhoods throughout the city. He said that will enable experienced prosecutors to make smarter decisions about what charges to bring in a given case, and encourage witnesses to come forward.

A judge last month knocked Williams off the ballot after rival Dan McCaffery challenged the veracity of Williams' campaign expense reports. Commonwealth Court wisely reinstated Williams; the issue wasn't significant enough to disqualify him. But Williams should have kept more detailed records.

The campaign of McCaffery, 44, is well-funded by the city's trade unions. McCaffery served in the D.A.'s office from 1991 to 1996, and promises to create dedicated task forces to go after drug gangs and the worst violent criminals.

McCaffery vows to call out city judges whom he deems as lazy or soft on crime by publicizing their perceived shortcomings on a Web site.

That's a bad idea, and a particularly poor use of the D.A.'s time.

Shaming judges is not the D.A.'s role; nor is it the answer to the city's crime problems. Not to mention it's unfair, since judges are prevented by rules of conduct in most cases from publicly defending their sentencing decisions.

Among McCaffery's most prominent supporters is labor leader John Dougherty, who has been under federal investigation and whose electricians' union was fined by the city ethics board last fall for dirty campaign tricks against Mayor Nutter.

It's a troubling alliance for someone who aspires to become Philadelphia's top elected law-enforcement officer.

Candidate Dan McElhatton, 59, served as an assistant district attorney from 1975 to 1978 and as a city councilman from 1992 to '96. He brings a strong record of community involvement and public service. McElhatton has served as vice chair of the city's ethics board and as chairman of the board of Philadelphia Community College.

McElhatton says the next D.A. needs to "change the mindset of the city," but his cautious approach doesn't fit the city's needs.

Brian Grady, 40, was an assistant to Abraham from 1993 to '98, racking up an unbroken string of convictions in felony jury trials. He has run a criminal defense practice for nine years.

Grady says he'd rather focus on problems like witness intimidation than investigate political corruption. You'd want him in a foxhole with you, but it's not clear if he has the breadth of experience yet to lead the office.

Michael Turner, 52, was an assistant D.A. from 1981 to 1986. He has impressive experience outside the prosecutor's office, co-founding both a private civil law practice and a local bank.

He pledges to make municipal corruption a priority and to save money by diverting low-level criminal cases out of the prison system. Turner bills himself as the apolitical candidate - a laudable quality often missing from the current D.A. The next D.A. would be wise to rid the office of any political influence.

Voters should pay close attention to this key race, which may very well be decided by a light turnout. A fair and impartial D.A. with good ethics is needed. Among this deep field, the best candidate is Seth Williams.”

The *Inquirer* endorsement comes as Seth’s campaign continues to pick up momentum heading into the final weeks of the campaign. In the last few weeks, Seth has picked up backing from ACORN, Philly for Change, the Guardian Civic League and the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #5. Seth is also being supported by the Black Clergy of Philadelphia and the Vicinity, more than a dozen former Assistant District Attorneys, 12 state elected officials, the Fraternal Order of Police Philadelphia Housing Authority, the Transportation Workers Union Local 232.

Seth Williams, the City's former Inspector General, has 10 years of experience as a top prosecutor and supervisor in Philadelphia's District Attorney's Office. For more information, please visit his campaign Web site at www.votesethwilliams.com.

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