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Editorial: Why Scarlett Wilson is the clear choice for Charleston, Berkeley solicitor

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

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Scarlett Wilson

Ben Pogue has built his campaign for 9th Circuit solicitor around racial justice, arguing that the chief prosecutor for Charleston and Berkeley counties has “REFUSED to secure basic fairness and racial equity” and pledging to “FINALLY STOP the systemic Racism in our Solicitor’s Office.”

His argument might be compelling if he were running against someone other than Scarlett Wilson, who has a record few prosecutors can match of addressing the problems in the criminal justice system that are suddenly dominating headlines across the nation.



NEWS

Racial justice at forefront as Charleston attorneys compete for 9th Circuit solicitor post

BY FLEMING SMITH FSMITH@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

Even before Ms. Wilson made the rare decision in 2016 to bring murder charges against a police officer, she had begun collecting data to identify implicit bias in her office against minorities.

She took that information public last fall, launching a case search feature that allows the public to review every decision her prosecutors make and the reasoning behind it. It was the first such transparency initiative in South Carolina and one of only a few nationally.

Then in July, she announced that the Justice Innovation Lab at Georgetown University was using her data to conduct an independent study of racial bias in her office's decisions.

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Meantime, she has lobbied the Legislature for years to fund police body cameras and make it a separate crime for police to shoot a fleeing suspect without justification. (Ms. Wilson probably would have gotten that 12th juror to vote to convict former North Charleston police officer Michael Slager for killing Walter Scott as the unarmed man ran away if she had been able to charge him with using excessive force rather than murder and voluntary homicide.)



COLUMNISTS

Hicks: Wilson, researchers searching for bias in prosecutions ... to eliminate it

BY BRIAN HICKS BHICKS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

And a year and a half ago, Ms. Wilson convinced local police to turn over all investigations of officer-involved critical incidents to outside investigators, allow her office to play a key role in the investigations and follow new procedures to treat investigations of police like other investigations, for instance no longer allowing police to review videotape evidence before being questioned.

Has she done enough to build trust among African Americans and other groups who have felt targeted by police and prosecutors? No. And she's the first to admit that.

Maybe that's why Mr. Pogue, who has no experience as a prosecutor or even as a criminal defense attorney, has had to stretch so far to build his case.

He suggests that Ms. Wilson deliberately excludes black people from juries, but his evidence is a study that a Circuit Court judge rejected as grossly incomplete and misleading.



COMMENTARY

Scoppe: 'Why do people run from police?' and other questions that deserve an answer

BY CINDI ROSS SCOPPE

Even worse is his attack on her opening argument in the Slager trial. He mentioned it twice in our 14-question [candidate questionnaire](#), and a [campaign ad](#) mixes video of Mr. Slager gunning down Mr. Scott with Ms. Wilson telling jurors: "If Walter Scott had stayed in that car, he wouldn't have been shot" and "He lost his life for his foolishness."

The ad leaves off her very next sentence, which made it clear she was tackling the biggest obstacle to a conviction — the too-common belief that people who run from the police deserve what they get: She pivoted and told jurors it was their job to "bring accountability to Michael Slager, for his choice, for his decision, to go too far. For his decision to let his sense of authority get the better of him. For his decision to shoot an unarmed man in the back. Five times. To try to shoot him eight times."

**COLUMNISTS****Hicks column: Wilson wants to build community trust with better policing laws****BY BRIAN HICKS BHICKS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM**

The job of most lawyers is to win. The job of a prosecutor is to ensure that justice is done. That means not bringing a case she knows she could win if she isn't certain the defendant is guilty. It means not making that winning argument when it's out of context, or misleading, or both.

Ms. Wilson understands that. Mr. Pogue does not. Even if there weren't so many other reasons to reelect Ms. Wilson — and there are — this fact alone would be reason aplenty. Ms. Wilson has been a good solicitor; she deserves our votes.

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Hicks column: Solicitor Wilson wants SC to lock the revolving door for violent offenders

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Editorial: Right decision on Roof trial