

Maryland's Appellate Judges

MARYLAND VOTERS will be asked next Tuesday whether to keep several of the state's appellate judges in office. The question is the result of an important reform in judicial selection and, since the process is still a recent one, it deserves special notice.

There are two traditional methods of picking judges—election and appointment—neither of which is entirely satisfactory. Requiring judges to run in partisan elections can push them into unseemly dependence on party organizations, especially when the elections are contested. But an unwise appointment by a governor who is careless, or perhaps paying a debt, can continue to damage the state's legal system long after the offending governor has departed. For its appellate courts, Maryland has adopted an ingenious solution under which the governor makes the appointments but, after two years of service, the

judges go on the ballot. There is no party label and no opposition. The only question is continuance in office—yes or no.

Judge Rita C. Davidson of the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, has served with unusual distinction. It ought to be a matter of particular pride in Montgomery County, where her career began, to retain her on the bench. Her name appears on the ballot in Montgomery and the four counties of western Maryland.

Judge Edward O. Weant Jr. of the intermediate Court of Special Appeals is on the ballot statewide. Judge H. Kemp MacDaniel is on the Harford and Baltimore County ballots. Both had wide experience as trial judges before their appointments, and both have shown solid ability. All three of these judges have earned yes votes.