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**Challengers in judicial race air rebuttal TV ad  
Cable spot reinforces tough-on-crime theme, includes endorsements**

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The challengers in the heated Howard County judicial race tried to reinforce their tough-on-crime campaign theme yesterday with a new cable TV ad that rebuts their electoral opponents' depiction of them as hypocrites on the crime issue.

The 30-second spot cites endorsements of the challengers -- District Court Judge Lenore R. Gelfman and attorney Jonathan Scott Smith -- by former county police chiefs Paul H. Rappaport and Robert O. Mathews and former county State's Attorney William R. Hymes.

The ad also shows a picture of -- but does not name -- three past and current presidents of the Howard County chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and says they "have reviewed Judge Gelfman's decisions and are familiar with Mr. Smith's law practice and support only them." The challengers' campaign later named them as President David Morris and Deborah Derwart and Tony Pung.

The challengers paid \$4,032 for the ad to run 504 times on nine Comcast cable stations, including ESPN, CNN and the Family Channel until Monday, their campaign's most expensive media buy in the fall campaign season.

The new ad attempts to directly counter two cable TV ads from the sitting judges in the election -- Circuit Court Judges Diane O. Leasure and Donna Hill Staton -- that assert that Gelfman and Smith were hypocritical and misleading on the crime issue.

Republican Del. Robert L. Flanagan, a close adviser to the challengers, said the new ad's message is important.

"We are the ones that raised the issue of crime. We expressed our concern on safety in the community. Now the other side is trying to question it," he said.

Smith said the endorsements in the ad are "a powerful statement to make," adding: "We're running a positive campaign, and the ad is part of our positive message."

But the new ad focuses from its outset on the sitting judges' charges in their cable TV ads. "You've heard our opponents claim Lenore Gelfman is not a tough judge and Jonathan Scott Smith defends the accused " says an off-camera voice before launching into the six endorsements.

The sitting judges' two ads, which began running last week, are still on the air. One focuses on a sentence handed down by Gelfman three years ago to a drunken driver who killed a Catonsville psychologist; the driver was sentenced to four years, with all but 18 months suspended.

The other points to Smith's role as a defense attorney -- in which he advertises to defend drunken drivers and repeat offenders.

Carol A. Arscott, political consultant for the sitting judges' campaign, said the challengers' new ad actually reinforces her clients' allegations. "I guess {the sitting judges' ads} stung, as the truth often does," Arscott said. "It's nice for them to try to play on our field."

The new ad refers to former police chiefs Rappaport and Mathews -- whose endorsement was announced in a press conference last week -- and former State's Attorney Hymes as "real crime-fighters."

Mathews, a Cecil County resident and registered Libertarian, works in the nuclear services division of the Wackenhut Corp., a security company. He served as Howard police chief from 1974 until 1979. Rappaport, who succeeded him and served until 1987, is an attorney in private practice who ran unsuccessfully as a Republican candidate for lieutenant governor in 1994.

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Hymes, a Democrat who did not seek re-election for state's attorney in 1994 after serving for 16 years, is retired and living in Florida.

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