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Reject the Arnick Nomination

The integrity of both the Maryland state Senate and the Maryland judiciary are at stake today as the nomination of former Del. John S. Arnick comes up for an expected final vote in Annapolis. In our view, Mr. Arnick's undisputed displays of gender bias and his aggressive demeanor, especially toward women, make him ill suited for a seat on the District Court.

Few members of the legislature have addressed the central issue: Mr. Arnick's fitness for serving as a judge. Instead, they have rallied around their longtime colleague, even using subtle forms of intimidation to keep women from coming forward to testify against the nominee. A number of female legislators and lobbyists also have rushed to Mr. Arnick's defense, in an apparent attempt to curry favor with the male leadership of the General Assembly. They believe in the wisdom of the expression, "you've got to go along to get along."

No wonder the public is so enraged. The governor and General Assembly leaders want to use the judiciary as a dumping ground for their problem legislators. They want to win quick confirmation of Mr. Arnick's nomination because he has been an erratic but hard-working power in the legislature for over two decades. To heck with his qualifications, or lack of qualifications, to be a judge.

That is the wrong approach. No one in the Senate ever bothered to investigate the allegations lev-

eled at Mr. Arnick of crude language and his deep-seated bias against women. They simply accepted his non-response: "I can't remember."

That's not acceptable. The Senate is embarrassing itself by ramming the nomination through when so many questions remain unanswered. But enough has been revealed for the public to size up the situation itself: in letters, phone calls and personal responses to legislators, the public has let them know there's no way Mr. Arnick should be confirmed for a 10-year District Court appointment with its sizable pension and excellent job security.

District Court judges wield enormous power. They play the role of judge, jury, prosecutor, defense lawyer, investigator, social worker and psychiatrist. This line of work does not demand a legal scholar or a career politico. What it does require is someone with enormous patience, impeccable common sense and the utmost impartiality and fairness.

Does Mr. Arnick measure up? Absolutely not.

His years of dedicated service in the legislature can't compensate for his glaring shortcomings. When the time comes, senators owe it to their constituents to vote "no" and uphold the integrity of the judiciary. Otherwise, the public will conclude — quite rightly — that these senators are more worried about protecting their own kind than in doing what is best for the citizens of Maryland.