**Choosing a Judge**

**Student Handout: JUDICIAL SELECTION PROCESS**

Judges in the Minnesota court system are elected to six-year terms. However, most often judges will retire in the middle of their terms. When this happens, the state’s governor has the authority under the Minnesota Constitution to appoint replacements. A replacement judge is then up for election the first election that occurs at least one year after the date of appointment. This gives the judge an opportunity to become familiar with the job and provides the people with enough information to evaluate the judge during the election.

The selection process used by a governor is often the subject of controversy. Should the new judge be a friend? Should an independent group make recommendations to the governor? If so, who should belong to the group? Lawyers? People who are not lawyers? What personality traits and experiences should be viewed as important in a judge candidate?

You have been appointed to a advisory group that will be recommending persons to the governor. Read

the characteristics listed below and categorize them under the most appropriate heading: essential requirements, desirable qualities, undesirable qualities, and unnecessary qualities. After you have completed this activity, develop a definition of a “good” judge. Write it in the space provided.

**CHARACTERISTICS**

1. female

2. old and wise

3. Republican

4. pro peace

5. fair

6. radical

7. determined

8. youthful

9. pro environment

10. collegial

11. good campaigner

12. aggressive

13. self-reliant

14. honest

15. good looking

16. clear thinker

17. concise writer

18. child of immigrant

19. male

20. single parent

21. good health

22. conservative

23. humane

24. traditional

25. well-educated

26. Democrat

27. liberal

28. controversial

29. judicial experience

30. family-oriented

31. supports welfare

32. handicapped

33. trustworthy

34. risk-taker

35. helpful

36. religious

37. loyal

38. brilliant mind

39. eminent legal scholar

40. good fundraiser

41. trial attorney

42. U.S. Citizen

43. independent thinker

44. strict constructionist

45. eloquent speaker

46. pro choice

47. supports foreign aid

48. opposes school prayer

49. person of color

50. opposes higher taxes

51. civil rights activist

52. holder of public office

53. business background

54. community-minded

55. distinguished lawyer

56. follows party line

57. middle-of-the-road

58. tough on crime

59. DWI conviction

60. pro life

**ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS**

**DESIRABLE QUALITIES**

**UNDESIRABLE QUALITIES**

**UNNECESSARY QUALITIES**

Develop a definition of a "good" justice or judge.