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2 justices win races, keep seats

Primary settles it in appellate court with no GOP rivals ahead

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The more things change, the more they stay the same.

That was the case Tuesday night in a pair of primary races as Justices Sheldon A. Harris and John B. Simon staved off opponents to win full 10-year terms for spots on the 1st District Appellate Court where they already sit. Neither Democrat has a Republican opponent in the general election.

In his three-way primary, Harris defeated Cook County Circuit Judges Freddrenna M. Lyle and Susan Kennedy Sullivan by 5,164 and 24,558 votes, respectively.

Harris, who was appointed to the court in 2010 after a decade as a trial judge, garnered 37.5 percent of the vote versus 35.3 and 27.2 percent for Lyle and Sullivan.

All three of the judges were running to fill the vacancy created after the death of Joseph Gordon in June 2012.

Although the Cook County Democratic Party backed Lyle, Harris was the only candidate in his race rated as "qualified" by both the Illinois State Bar Association and The Chicago Bar Association.

He said he told the party he would have "no alternative but to

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fight" for his seat if they did not endorse him in the race.

"Voters are getting smarter," Harris added in a prepared statement.

"If a judicial candidate is fortunate in getting his message directly out to the electorate, then party slating and newspaper endorsements no longer dominate. I'm thrilled to be kept on the appellate court, where I will continue to do the best work I can."

Neither Lyle nor Sullivan could be reached for comment today.

The 72-year-old Harris, a Northbrook resident, also pointed out in a Daily Law Bulletin survey that he's authored more than 140 opinions since joining the appeals court.

He highlighted recent decisions that "dealt with serious issues such as keeping guns out of the hands of felons (*People v. Neely*, No. 12-004)" and "the elimination in Illinois of mandatory 'life without parole' sentencing of juveniles (*People v. Williams*, No. 11-3016)."

Additionally, Harris raised and spent the most money by the end of last year — the most recent stretch for which aggregate numbers were available from the Illinois State Board of Elections. He spent nearly \$45,000 during the latter half of 2013 and had nearly \$200,000 in his coffers during that same span.

Lyle spent more than \$18,400



Sheldon A. Harris

and had a little more than \$31,000 in her war chest between July and December.

Sullivan raised \$40,000 and spent three-quarters of it during that period.

In the other contested Democratic primary in Cook County for the state appellate court, incumbent Simon beat Circuit Judge Sharon Oden Johnson by 18,713 votes in a race to fill the seat of retired justice John Owen Steele.

Simon, who was appointed to the appellate court in 2012, won 122,982 total votes, amounting to 54.1 percent, against 104,269 votes and 45.9 percent for Johnson.

"I'm very gratified by the support I received from the public," Simon said. "It's my passion to be on the bench and be involved in the law."

Like Harris, Simon had the stamp of approval of both the ISBA and CBA, while his



John B. Simon

challenger did not.

He reported more than \$160,000 in campaign funds at the end of 2013, spending close to \$56,000 of it before the end of the year.

Johnson had a campaign committee but did not report any contributions or expenditures. She could not be reached for comment.

Elsewhere in the 1st District, Democrat David A. Ellis ran unopposed to fill the seat of the late justice Michael J. Murphy, who died in 2012.

Ellis is the former chief legal counsel to House Speaker Michael J. Madigan and may be best-known for leading the chamber's prosecution of former Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Downstate, Republican Justices Michael J. Burke of the 2nd District and Lisa Holder White of the 4th District also ran unopposed and won full terms on their respective appellate courts.