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Medical malpractice looms large in Illinois Supreme Court judge's retention campaign

An Illinois Supreme Court judge who earlier this year voted to throw out a 2005 law that placed caps on the amount patients could receive in medical malpractice cases has raised \$2.5 million for his retention campaign. Opponents of Tom Kilbride, who is running as an independent, have raised \$650,000 to campaign against his retention.

Combined, the \$3 million+ raised make this contentious race the most expensive Supreme Court retention campaign the state has ever seen, according to the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform.

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Under the 2005 law, jury awards for pain and suffering had been capped at \$500,000 for doctors and \$1 million for hospitals. Kilbride, along with three other judges, voted to overturn those caps as violating the state's constitution.

The Kilbride campaign has received the majority (\$1.4 million) of its money from the Illinois Democratic Party. The Illinois Federation of Teachers have also pitched in hundreds of thousands of dollars. His opponents believe these large donations show Kilbride is not the independent he claims to be.

“He claims in his commercials that he’s independent. That is pure hogwash,” said Ed Murnane, president of the Illinois Civil Justice League, which is heading the campaign opposing Kilbride’s retention. The league has been rallying support from national tort reformers and business interests because of the malpractice decision. The Kilbride campaign accuses its opponents of running a “smear campaign” and distorting Kilbride’s record.

The race has also drawn interest because the court is split along party lines. Kilbride is one of four Democrats on the court, while the other three justices are Republicans. It is feasible that a Republican could replace him on the court if he is not retained. However, an Illinois Supreme Court justice has never lost a retention race.

Source: [The Galesburg Register-Mail](#) To read the malpractice decision at the heart of the campaign against Judge Kilbride, go [here](#).

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