

Gableman says he won't run for re-election to Supreme Court

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Conservative Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman announced Thursday he will not seek re-election next year, saying he is "more hopeful than ever in the triumph of the rule of law in Wisconsin."

Gableman's statement did not explicitly address whether he will fill out the rest of his term, which ends in August 2018. But a spokesman said it was his understanding that Gableman plans to complete his term.

The justice said in the statement he trusts "the people of Wisconsin will elect a successor who is similarly committed to the rule of law."

Gableman said he ran nine years ago believing that "judges ought to apply the law rather than make it."

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"In decisions large and small, I have fulfilled my promises and put my judicial philosophy into practice," Gableman said in the statement.

If Gableman does not complete his term, it would give Gov. Scott Walker the opportunity to appoint a third justice to the court. Rebecca Bradley last year won retention to the bench after being appointed following the death of Justice Patrick Crooks, while Justice Daniel Kelly, appointed to fill David Prosser's spot after his retirement, would face voters in 2020 for a full term.

Rumors about Gableman's future have swirled for some time. Fellow conservative Justice Annette Ziegler by this time last year had already lined up a series of fundraisers as she raised more than \$200,000 in the second half of June 2016. She eventually won re-election without facing opposition. By comparison, there have

been few signs that Gableman was ramping up for a re-election bid.

Two candidates had already lined up to challenge Gableman, including Madison attorney Tim Burns, Milwaukee Judge Rebecca Dallet.

And Sauk County Circuit Court Judge Michael Screnock announced today he will also run for the post. He said in his [announcement](#) he shares the incumbent's "belief that it is the role of a judge to say what the law is and not what it should be."

Dallet tweeted after news broke of Gableman's decision, "I'm running for the Supreme Court because it's out of balance. Justice Gableman is clearly part of the problem. But it's not just about him, it's about the direction of the court. I'm confident voters will see the need for experience and impartiality and I'm looking forward to earning the voters' trust."

Burns, meanwhile, wrote on Twitter he's the only candidate in the race he's been "talking about the harm the conservative majority on the court has done to our state."

"It's time for this court to have a lawyer with a breadth of experience and particularly experience at keeping massive conglomerates in check," Burns tweeted.

If Gableman fills out his term, it would be the first open Supreme Court race since 2007, when Ziegler defeated Madison attorney Linda Clifford.

Gableman won his seat in 2008, beating then-Justice Louis Butler. He became the first challenger to beat a sitting incumbent since 1967. But he also faced an ethics complaint over a TV ad he ran in the campaign that critics called misleading. The Supreme Court deadlocked 3-3 on whether to dismiss the complaint.

Gableman would be the first justice to win a spot on the court, serve a full term and not seek re-election since Justice Robert Hansen. He was the last challenger before Gableman to defeat an incumbent justice. But he did not seek re-election in 1977.

Gableman's announcement included statements from his four fellow conservatives on the court praising him. Meanwhile, Gov. Scott Walker said Gableman showed an "untiring commitment to the rule of law and the proper role of the judiciary during his time on the Wisconsin Supreme Court."