

Associate justice speaks

Jennifer Guarino
Editor in Chief

Bob Orr, a North Carolina Supreme Court justice, spoke to political science students Monday about the difficulties of running for re-election and the role of the state Supreme Court.

"The first rule of politics is you never mention your opponent's name," Orr said when asked who he was running against. Orr is seeking re-election after completing his first eight-year term on the court. Democrat Bob Hunter is challenging him. Previously, he served as a judge for the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Orr says elections for judicial candidates will be nonpartisan in 2004 based on the Judicial Reform Act. Some of the tools available to candidates next year will be voter guides, which provide background on all candidates to inform voters. Orr says he feels the guides will not be effective. "Voter guides are puff pieces... it doesn't tell you much," Orr said. "We live in an information-overload society. Who is going to read a voter guide for a judge?"

While judicial candidates are supposed to be politically neutral,

"The legislature is so bitterly divided on party lines, on ideological lines, that people are going to get caught in the meat grinder.

—Bob Orr, N.C. Supreme Court Justice

professor Betty Morgan says they associate with parties "because it is so difficult to give voters who are under-informed any other kind of information that makes any sense. Convention wisdom is that if we have party labels, it tells voters core values and help them decide between candidates."

A student asked how the state could avoid the effect of partisan politics in the judicial branch by lifetime appointments for judges. Orr says issues of accountability and independence come into conflict and he would rather judges be accountable to the people. "The legislature is so bitterly divided on party lines, on ideological lines, that people are going to get caught in the meat grinder," Orr said.

Orr discussed the struggles judges encounter in elections. The average judgeship race will raise \$100,000, while major Senate races may raise \$10 million, he said.

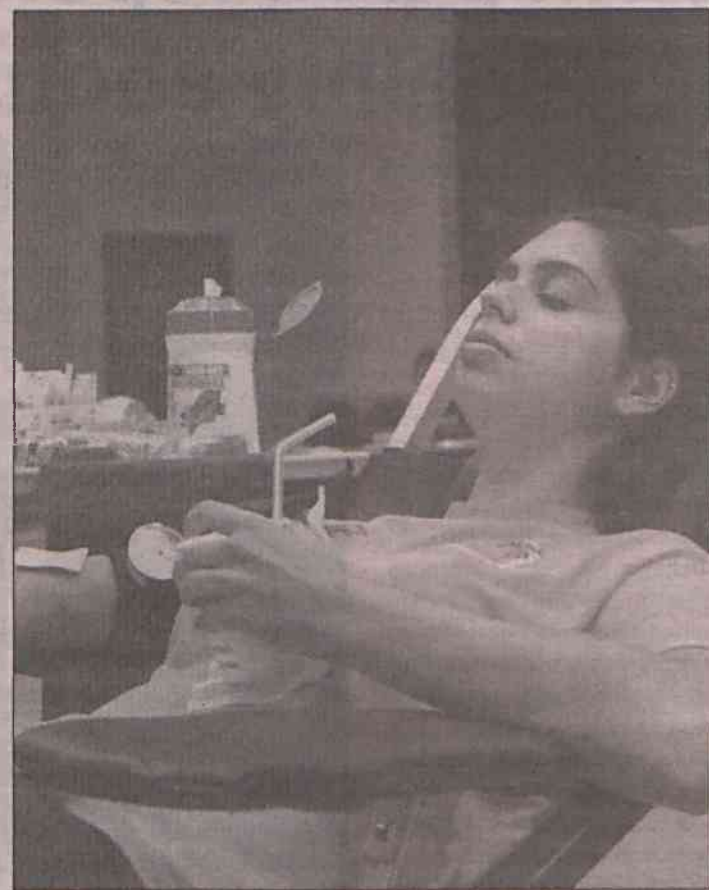
With the responsibility to be fair, Orr says state Supreme Court members must find a balance between money and endorsements and their role as upholders of the state constitution.

"The money isn't driving decisions, at least in court races," Orr said. Former Chief Justice Burley B. Mitchell Jr. and the N.C. Association of Educators have endorsed his candidacy. "Those endorsements move voters."

Orr has been in the news recently as the Democratic Party called for the investigation of Orr's involvement in a political rally for Elizabeth Dole in June. The party asserted that Orr violated the Code of Judicial Conduct by endorsing an candidate. The panel investigating the matter has closed the case without action.

Contact Jennifer Guarino at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.

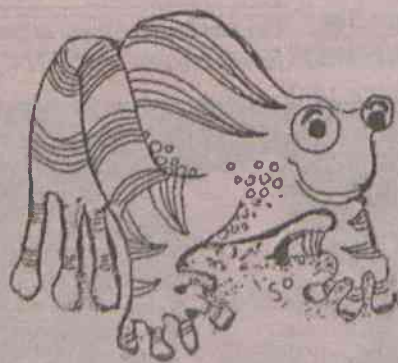
Students donate blood



Tim Rosner/Photography Editor

Student, Jenny Brown, gives blood Wednesday morning in Moseley Center. Volunteers signed up to donate blood all week for the EV! sponsored blood drive.

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