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**Letter to the Editor/Op-Ed Piece: What's Wrong with Patty Judge**  
***Independent Candidate Michael Luick-Thrams critiques the Would-be Senator***

Des Moines, IA — This past weekend a major Des Moines TV station ran a featurette about Patty Judge's come-lately campaign to be the Democratic nominee to run against GOP stalwart, Iowa Senator Charles Grassley. As I watched it, it reminded me of some of the driving reasons I'm running as in Independent.

First, I don't like being snowed by unsubstantiated claims—"spin" in most political circles. Having gotten in the past two weeks a third of the 1,500 signatures I need by August to run myself for the US Senate from Iowa, I'm perplexed by Judge's claim that support for her run has been "overwhelming." Not only have I heard—with one notable exception, in Carl's Bar on Sherman Hill—blatantly negative or at least lukewarm response from Iowans about the specter of her running in November; I also have heard rank-and-file of the Iowa Democratic Party pointedly support Rob Hogg's or Tom Fiegen's runs over hers.

Second, I don't like what it says that despite Hogg's, Fiegen's and Bob Krause's months' of preparations to run for the US Senate, the moment Patty utters the slightest interest to run, the DC Democratic Party machinery for sure, and apparently part of the Iowa Democratic one begins to salivate and float into a state of euphoria. Not only is such reflex support for the 72-year-old unfair, even disrespectful to the dedicated and considered preparation of the other three, but it betrays how undemocratic the "Democratic" echelon has become. Don't be surprised, folks, if the Democratic bigwigs in DC, if not in Des Moines, ram Patty's nomination to the fore at the expense of her hardworking competition.

Third, I don't like Judge's indelible loyalties. Long an ally of Big Business (think Monsanto and you'd have thought of much of it), Judge has repeatedly flouted the interest of the care-needy elderly on behalf of the state's nursing-home moguls. She has sided with the Farm Bureau so often—and with the rising yet fragile organic-agriculture movement so seldom. Recently, she joined forces with those who would block Polk County's efforts to advance the issue—even if symbolically—of ultimate responsibility for Iowa's increasingly contaminated water sources. Patty Judge embodies the Good-Old-Boys clique, but in a skirt.

Fourth, the issues Judge cites as her most urgent reflect the failure of liberalism, not just conservatism in this country. While conservatives generally wish to conserve the existing social order, liberals would toy with reforming but never replacing it. That's a pity, for at present America faces a systematic failure in most areas of public life: Which sub-system of contemporary America would *you* patent and peddle abroad if you could—our "justice" or penal system? Our rigged economic model; our healthcare system, perhaps—or senior-care system? The systems we use to supply the nation with and distribute fuel, food or other essential resources? Our educational system? How could we herald *any* of those? I wouldn't.

As a member of the avant-garde of the oldest surviving political party in the world (the Democratic, founded in 1828—with the Republican only sixteen years its junior), Patty embodies The Establishment. She claims to be "Progressive," yet that label looks very different than siding, repeatedly and with such loyalty, to the elite that ramrods special interests over those of the non-elite. Iowa deserves better. ###