

Title: **We just can't seem to avoid S.C. cronyism**

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We just can't seem to avoid S.C. cronyism

Guest column

Hannah Hill

The state's Judicial Merit Selection Committee screens and nominates judicial candidates. Its members are picked by the House speaker and the Senate president pro tem. State law requires that four of the 10 members be "selected from the general public," while the other six must be sitting legislators.

That takes us to former Sen. Wes Hayes of Rock Hill. It's not our intent to denigrate him in any way – for all we know, he may be an ideal JMSC member. But there are two things wrong with his recent appointment.

First, when the law requires that individuals from the general public be appointed to the numerous boards and commissions that make up

state government, it's safe to say that's because ordinary Joes bring something to the table that government officials do not. That's the point of citizen government.

So when lawmakers are forced by state law to involve citizens, it kind of defeats the purpose to pick someone who just left state government – in fact, it smacks strongly of cronyism.

In any case, it's fair to say that a fresh-out-of-office senator who served for 31 years in the General Assembly doesn't exactly bring that ordinary perspective the law is aiming at.

Second, the former senator was just defeated in his party primary. For whatever reason, his constituents opted to

end his time in state government. It seems like defiance of the will of the people for the Senate president pro tem to find another way to keep Hayes in power – one that's safe from the voice of the electorate.

Sen. Hayes' appointment to the JMSC is just the latest example, but this type of thing happens all the time. Lawmakers routinely give appointments to friends, family, staffers and former colleagues in the legislature. It's an unfortunate reality in state government, and it will continue for as long as the voters allow these guys to remain in office – and sometimes even voting them out isn't enough.

The writer is a policy analyst at the S.C. Policy Council.