Heavy campaign spending once again in Michigan Supreme Court races

The eight candidates running for three open slots on the Michigan Supreme Court have spent nearly $700,000 on TV ad buys as of this week.

Democrat Richard Bernstein’s campaign alone has spent more than $400,000. The combined campaign of incumbent Republican justices Richard Zahra and David Vivian has committed to buy nearly $250,000 worth of TV ad time between now and the election in November.

The bulk of the campaign ads in Michigan’s Supreme Court race are scheduled to start airing next month.

This is nothing new. Michigan had the most expensive state Supreme Court race in the country in 2012.

Bert Brandenburg is with Justice at Stake. He says expensive campaigns for Michigan Supreme Court threaten to undermine the public’s trust in the courts.

“We’re at a point now where something like 90% of the public believe that campaign cash is affecting courtroom decisions,” says Bert Brandenburg of Justice at Stake. Credit: Steve Carmody / Michigan Radio

Brandenburg expects a wave of special interest group spending will try to sway Michigan voters in the Supreme Court races between now and the November election.

In November, Michigan voters will choose between five candidates (Incumbent Justice Brian Zahra, James Robert Redford, Bill Murphy, Dough Dern, and Richard
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