

# Goffstown police prosecutor eyed to replace Coughlin

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A screening committee has picked Goffstown police prosecutor Kerry Steckowych as the candidate it prefers to see replace Hillsborough County Attorney John Coughlin.

Six attorneys submitted applications. The Hillsborough County Delegation is slated to vote Jan. 13 on who will serve out Coughlin's remaining term. Coughlin's National Guard unit has been activated to bolster forces in Iraq.

State Rep. Edward Moran of Bedford said the five other candidates can do the job, but the committee would like someone who is willing to run for the office when the current term expires at the end of this year.

**"We were concerned about a continuum in that office which has had enough turmoil," Moran said, referring to the difficult transition that followed the election defeat of longtime County Attorney Peter McDonough.**

Hillsborough County Executive Committee chairman J. Gail Barry of Manchester stressed that all members of the county delegation will receive copies of the candidates' resumes in the mail and can contact them personally if they wish. The candidates will be given three minutes each to speak before the vote.

The Executive Committee decided not to vote formally to recommend a candidate, but to present the screening committee's findings when the delegation convenes.

State law requires the delegation to elect replacements when county offices become vacant.

**Rep. Moran said he felt squeamish about making a recommendation for an elected post, yet at the same time it was critical to get a good manager to take over the office and get it running effectively as quickly as possible.**

"The Superior court starts up in February," said State Rep. Robert Mercer of Nashua when it was suggested the vote could be delayed. "We have to have someone soon to make decisions and assign cases. It's critical that we move ahead."

Moran said Steckowych is "probably capable of doing the best job of pulling the office together and doing a highly qualified job... We thought we'd have the best odds with him of making it work."

The candidates include Andrew Ouellete of Amherst, currently a prosecutor in the county attorneys office; Marguerite Wageling, a former county prosecutor and now an assistant attorney general; Kate Dyer of Nashua, a former district court prosecutor; Henry Spaloss of Nashua, an attorney for four decades who has been volunteering in the Nashua office of the county attorney, and Dennis Hogan, an attorney in Nashua.