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Chief Judge Kaye, still

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With all the upheaval in Albany, there is one mainstay New Yorkers would surely hate to lose: Chief Judge Judith Kaye. For more than 13 years Kaye has shown remarkable fortitude diplomatically goading the state's mammoth court system out of inertia and in positive directions. Despite polarizing politics all around - forces often stymieing the two other branches of government - Kaye has realized innovation and reform.

Gov. Eliot Spitzer has nominated Kaye for another term on New York's highest court. Kaye will be able to serve just 21 more months before reaching the mandatory retirement age of 70. New Yorkers should gladly take every one of them. Under her leadership on the Court of Appeals, she has been a model of moderation and clear-headedness. The first woman to serve on the Court of Appeals and its first female chief, she has served on the seven-member high court since 1983, named chief judge in 1993. Among the high-profile majority opinions she authored: the landmark 2003 Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, which held the state's education funding system unconstitutional, and the 1995 decision allowing adoption in New York by unmarried couples, both heterosexual and homosexual.

Among her numerous legal reforms: jury-selection improvements, expansion of drug and other specialized courts, consolidation of family courts and better pay for court-appointed lawyers. "I have a very long list," Kaye said of ideas she yet wants to accomplish. Kaye's current 14-year term technically ends in March. If confirmed by the state Senate, Kaye would be able to serve until Dec. 31, 2008. The Senate should not hesitate to approve her continued service.

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