

## State panel hears arguments on cross-endorsed judges

**By David McKay Wilson**

Staff Writer

ALBANY — A state appellate panel yesterday heard arguments in a case that seeks the removal of three local judges who were cross-endorsed by Westchester County political leaders last year.

Doris Sassower, a White Plains lawyer representing two county voters, last October unsuccessfully challenged the cross-endorsement process, saying that voters had been deprived of a choice for judicial office. Sassower yesterday reiterated her claims before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

"The deal permitted two party bosses to appoint our Supreme Court justices, hand-picked by them on political considerations, behind closed doors, and guaranteed them uncontested election," she said. "They got there by virtue of a corrupt political deal."

Justices on the five-member

panel questioned Sassower's request that they throw out the November election of Westchester County Surrogate Alfred Emanuelli and Supreme Court justices Howard Miller and Francis Nikolai of the Ninth Judicial District.

Justice Franklin Mahoney said he knew of no law that allowed an election to be voided after the fact. And Justice Howard Levine wondered why Sassower had neglected to seek the expulsion of Supreme Court Justice Joan Lefkowitz, who won a contested election.

Sassower said she wasn't concerned with Lefkowitz because her race against George Roberts was contested.

Sassower represented two Westchester voters - Mario Castacan and Vincent Bonelli. Named as plaintiffs were the Westchester Democratic and Republican parties and their leaders; boards of election on the county and state level; and the three justices.