

DA says

'no' to

Republican
6/10/09

re-election

Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel said her decision had nothing to do with any controversy encountered in recent months.

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NORTHAMPTON - Longtime Northwestern District Attorney Elizabeth D. Scheibel has announced that she will not run for re-election in November 2010.

"For me, after 30 years of doing this work, it's time to give someone else the opportunity to serve the citizens of the Northwestern District as their district attorney," Scheibel wrote in a statement.

Register of Probate David E. Sullivan has already said he will run for the seat and yesterday congratulated Scheibel on her long and distinguished career.

"I wish her the best as she finishes up her term," he said.

He said his campaign will now focus on how the criminal justice system will be more accessible and responsible to the public.

"I promise that my campaign will focus on public safety issues and innovative ideas to make the office of the district attorney the best in the commonwealth," he said.

Scheibel began working as a prosecutor in 1980 and was appointed as the district attorney in May of 1993 by former Gov. William F. Weld.

Scheibel has come under criticism over the past year for some of her prosecutorial decisions. More than 100 supporters of former University of Massachusetts student Jason Vassell marched on her office in November, claiming that the decision to charge him in the stabbing of two men was ra-



Elizabeth D. Scheibel

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cially biased. Vassell, who is black, said he was defending himself against the two white men who shouted racial slurs at him and attacked him in his dormitory.

Last month, Judge John A. Agostini criticized the way Scheibel's office has handled the affair that has come to be known as "Pottygate," in which the DA's office ostensibly convened a grand jury to investigate the alleged theft of a bathroom key from a locked office in the Hadley courthouse where the Franklin-Hampshire Juvenile Court convenes.

Scheibel said Tuesday afternoon that her decision had nothing to do with any controversy encountered in recent months.

"I had decided three years ago that this would be my last term," Scheibel said.

She said she wanted to announce her decision now to provide the opportunity for others to prepare for a run.

"This is the first time there's an open seat in more than 20 years," she said.

In her statement, she wrote, "I thank the citizens . . . for the trust they have placed in me and for the extraordinary experience they have provided for me. I look forward to serving the remainder of my term as vigorously as I have served the past sixteen years."

She said she has no plans for the future at this time, "but I'm not going to rule out anything."

Hampden County District Attorney William M. Bennett, who told voters when first elected in 1990 that he planned to serve only two terms, has said he will not decide until later this year if he will seek a fifth, four-year term.