Voters in 12 parishes, including East Baton Rouge Parish, will go to the polls Saturday to decide who will be one of the seven justices on the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Three candidates are entered in Saturday's election to fill the unexpired term of retiring Justice Fred Blanche Jr. of Baton Rouge.

Luther F. Cole of the 1st Circuit Court of Appeal, is the only judge in the race.

Cole, a Democrat, is joined on the ballot by two Baton Rouge lawyers, Democrat C. Alvin Tyler and Republican Patsy McDowell Cooper.

Cole has reported campaign contributions of $75,384. His opponents have filed affidavits saying they received no major contributions and have spent less than $5,000 on the race.

Tyler said Thursday that he had spent less than $3,000 on the campaign, while Cooper said she had spent about $2,500.

A native of Alexandria, Cole, 60, was elected state representative in 1963 and served until his 1966 election to the 19th District Court. He was elected to the appeal court in 1979.

Cooper, 55, is a lawyer with 28 years of general legal practice in the Baton Rouge area.

Tyler, 64, has practiced law since graduating from the LSU Law School in 1951. Blanche's 10-year term expires in 1988.

The 5th District seat on the court represents the parishes of East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, St. Landry, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Washington.

The polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., East Baton Rouge Registrar of Voters Nat Bankston said, predicting turnout will "be real light." He said 22 voters cast absentee ballots.

If a runoff election is necessary, it will be held May 3.

Seven justices sit on the Supreme Court, which is headquartered in New Orleans. They are elected for 10-year terms.

All three candidates have run for public office previously, but only Cole has won elective office. Cooper has run for District Court and Family Court judgeships, while Tyler has run for U.S. House of Representatives, District Court and Court of Appeal.

"The reason I'm running is that it's just a continuation of a judicial career that has spanned two decades, and naturally as a judge I'm interested in serving on the highest court in the state," Cole said.

"I think that with 20 years' experience as a trial judge and as a Court of Appeal judge, that it does qualify me to start rendering competent service on that court in the very beginning. I believe that my qualifications and my experience set me apart from the other candidates in the race," Cole said.

Cooper points to her 28 years' experience as a lawyer, beginning as an attorney for the Legal Aid Society.

"I was the first legal aid lawyer for Baton Rouge, and this was in 1958 when they were just starting it and it was under the Baton Rouge Bar Association then," Cooper said. "As a result of my work the first year there, the Baton Rouge Bar Association itself received national recognition from the American Bar Association, and this led to my being named to Who's Who in American Law and World Who's Who of Women," she said.

Tyler said, "I just had a desire... after I had practiced law a number of years to be a judge.

"I'm well qualified due to my extensive law practice and the diversity of it," Tyler said.