

Supreme Court makes appointments to Board of Bar Admissions

November 9, 2011

The Mississippi Supreme Court on Nov. 2 appointed two new members to the Mississippi Board of Bar Admissions and reappointed a third member. Attorneys Anthony R. Simon of Jackson and Wilford Albert Payne III of Hattiesburg are new members of the board, and Circuit Judge Smith Murphey of Batesville has been reappointed.

Justice Ann H. Lamar reappointed Judge Murphey for a full term on the Board of Bar Admissions. He previously was appointed to an unexpired term on the board on Jan. 20, 2009. Judge Murphey joined the Seventeenth Circuit bench in January 2011. He previously served as an assistant district attorney of the Seventeenth Circuit District for 14 years. He is former president of the Mississippi Prosecutors Association and former president of the Prosecutors Section of the Mississippi Bar.

Justice James W. Kitchens appointed Simon to the board seat previously held by Melanie Vardaman of Jackson, whose three-year term ended Oct. 31. Simon previously served on the Committee on Character and Fitness. Simon is a sole practitioner, representing plaintiffs and defendants in civil litigation in state and federal courts. He earned a degree in accounting from Howard University and a law degree from Howard University School of Law.

Justice Michael K. Randolph appointed Payne to the board seat previously held by John Ott of McComb. Ott served six years on the board. Ott's second term expired Oct. 31.

Payne is president of Camellia Home Health and Hospice, which operates in Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia and Tennessee. Payne earned a degree in managerial finance from the University of Mississippi. He earned a Masters in Business Administration and a law degree from Florida State University.

Gov. Haley Barbour recently signed certificates of appreciation for Ott, Vardaman and the other seven members of the Board of Bar Admissions. Certificates were presented to board members who attended a Sept. 15 board meeting at the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

Other members of the Board are Chairman Pieter Teeuwissen of Jackson, Vice-chair Ann Bowden-Hollis of Ocean Springs, Gwen Baptist-Hewlett of Southaven, Marcie Fyke Baria of Bay St. Louis, Wilton V. "Trey" Byars III of Oxford and Jeffrey Styres of Madison.

The Board of Bar Admissions administers the rules and statutes governing admission to the practice of law in Mississippi. The Board oversees the preparation, administration and evaluation of two bar examinations each year. The Board also, in conjunction with its Committee on Character and Fitness, oversees the investigation and evaluation of the character and fitness of each person who applies to become a member of the Mississippi Bar.

Board members are appointed by the Supreme Court to staggered three-year terms. Each member of the Supreme Court has an appointment on the Board.

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