

# Supreme Court Clerk Kathy Gillis to retire; Court appoints Muriel B. Ellis as new clerk

June 18, 2014

Mississippi Supreme Court Clerk Kathy Gillis will retire June 30 after 33 years of service to the court.

The court will appoint Muriel B. Ellis, a veteran of 23 years of work in the clerk's office, as the new clerk of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. She will be the first African-American clerk of the state's highest court. Ellis also was the first African-American deputy clerk and chief deputy clerk of the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. will administer the oath of office to Ellis at 9:30 a.m. July 1 in the En Banc Courtroom.

Chief Justice Waller said, "Kathy Gillis has been an outstanding clerk, one of the best in the history of this court. Muriel Ellis has been an able deputy who is prepared to continue the excellent service the clerk's office has provided under Kathy's leadership."

Ellis said, "It will be an honor to serve as the clerk of the Supreme Court."

Ellis was vacationing with her three grandchildren at Disney World's Magic Kingdom when she got the call letting her know that she had been selected as clerk. "That night my grandson told my daughter, 'Dreams do come true,'" she said.

Ellis will take over the office during a time of significant changes. Gillis and Ellis have supervised the transition of the clerk's office to electronic filing. Voluntary e-filing began July 1, 2013. Mandatory e-filing of briefs and motions went into effect Jan. 1, 2014. More than 4,400 documents have been filed electronically during the past year. The next phase, not yet implemented, will be e-mailed orders and clerk's notices. The final step will be electronic filing of transcripts and other records from the trial courts.

The clerk's office and the court's Information Technology department have done extensive work to implement the e-filing and docket management system and expand filing, retrieval and tracking capabilities to other court records. The clerk's office will soon begin scanning court records from 2000 forward, making them accessible to the public via the Internet.

It's a long way from the hand-written ledgers that were in use when Gillis joined the clerk's staff in 1981.

"It has always been interesting. It has been a lot of hard work, but I have never been bored," Gillis said. "I felt like I was making a contribution. I feel like I might have contributed a little bit to something much bigger than I am."

The office of the Clerk of the Courts is the repository of records of the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. More than 1,000 appeals were filed and decided by the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals last year, and the appellate courts addressed more than 5,800 motions. The clerk's office is responsible for docket management of approximately 1,700 open cases at any given time. The clerk's office, with a staff of 12,

is responsible for case management that tracks each appeal for timeliness and completeness of the record from the time the case is filed until it is decided by the court.

Gillis and Ellis both worked through the ranks of the clerk's office. Gillis joined the office May 1, 1981, as a legal clerk. She was a deputy clerk for four and one-half years, and was chief deputy clerk for 17 years. She became Clerk of the Court on June 1, 2009.

Gillis, 63, grew up in Jackson and graduated from Provine High School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history with a minor in English from Mississippi University for Women in 1972, and a Master of Arts in history from MUW in 1978. She taught ninth grade English in Columbus in 1974, then worked in the office of the registrar at MUW from 1976 to 1978. She is married to Walter Gillis. They have two daughters and a grandson.

Ellis, 54, of Jackson, joined the Supreme Court Clerk's staff as a legal clerk on Feb. 4, 1991. She became a team leader in 2000, and a deputy clerk in 2007. She became chief deputy clerk June 1, 2009. Ellis is a graduate of Callaway High School and Phillips Business College. She previously worked for the city of Jackson Water Department and for St. Dominic Hospital. She is married to Leonard Ellis Sr. They have three children and three grandchildren.

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