

Court of Appeals Judge Jack Wilson praised at investiture

August 28, 2015

Court of Appeals Judge Jack Wilson of Madison has a great legal mind, wisdom, fairness and a heart for public service, said officials who worked with him before his recent appointment.

Gov. Phil Bryant, who appointed Judge Wilson to the Court of Appeals, said, “To know that the very best of the best throughout history have been chosen, the wisest among men and women to be judges, is the reason upon which I selected Jack Wilson to be appointed to this court. I believe him to be among those great men with the discernment, with the leadership opportunity, with the heart to be a great judge for our state and for our country.”

Mississippi Court of Appeals Chief Judge L. Joseph Lee said, “We are indeed honored at the Court of Appeals to have him as our newest member. He has proven himself to be a most worthy and deserving jurist.”

Gov. Bryant appointed Judge Wilson on July 1 to the District 3, Position 1 judgeship left vacant by the retirement of Judge Larry Roberts of Meridian. Family, friends and colleagues gathered at the Court of Appeals on Aug. 25 for a formal investiture ceremony. Judge Wilson was sworn in and



began his duties on the Court of Appeals July 1. It is traditional to have a formal investiture ceremony later.

Judge Wilson said, “This is a special day for me and it’s a great feeling to look out and see so many friends and family and my pastors and former bosses....I especially want to thank Gov. Bryant for being here today, for giving me this opportunity and this great responsibility, for trusting me.”

“It’s a privilege to have worked for him. It’s an honor to be appointed by him and to stand here today, and I’m going to do my best to make sure this appointment reflects well on the Governor.”

Gov. Bryant hired Wilson as counsel for the office of the Governor at the start of his administration. “We were looking for a number of the top lawyers in the state – that I could afford.” The Governor noted that Wilson has plenty more lucrative opportunities, and could have worked on Wall Street. He chose instead to pursue public service in his home state.

Judge Wilson, 36, grew up in Jackson and Tupelo. He attended the University of Memphis, then earned a Bachelor of Accountancy from the University of Mississippi.

Judge Gerald Bard Tjoflat of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit in Jacksonville, Fla., hired Wilson as a law clerk shortly after he graduated from Harvard Law School. He praised Gov. Bryant’s appointment.

“Like the judges on the Supreme Court and this court, we judges hire law clerks. They are the brightest of the best, the cream of the crop, as they say. They come from the finest law schools.”

The Governor had a different perspective of Wilson’s Harvard Law education. “I was dubious of course at first because I realized he had gone to Harvard Law School. Now I am a conservative, a strict conservative

and constitutional conservative,” he said. “As we began to work together, I realized that Harvard had not damaged his vision at all. In fact I think perhaps it even brought it into more focus because Jack was the true conservative attorney that I had hoped for, not in a social manner, not someone that wanted to change the social fabric of Mississippi but wanted to strictly adhere to the Constitution and the laws thereof.... Interpretations are up to the courts and we certainly anticipate and accept those, but the right judge does make all the difference,” Gov. Bryant said.

Judge Tjoflat said, “Over the course of a year, one of the things that I admired about Jack was he didn’t have an agenda. He took every legal problem and looked at it the same way that a neurosurgeon would look at the x-rays and the MRI of a brain, and then brought all the skills he had acquired, and he is still acquiring them, to the task. So it didn’t matter what kind of case we were working on. He brought the same kind of devotion to the job.”

Judge Wilson said that Judge Tjoflat, “a legend and a giant of the federal bench,” inspired him to seek a judgeship. “Judge Tjoflat was a great mentor to me in my first year out of law school. He taught me a lot about the law and being a lawyer. Really it was seeing his passion and his love for his job that made me want to be a judge. I left Jacksonville in 2005 saying that’s what I want to do one day. I’m thrilled that he’s here to see that come to fruition.”

After working nearly two months on the court, “I can tell you already that this is truly a privilege,” Judge Wilson said. “I’m someone honestly who just loves the law and the judicial ... process and so for me to get to come to work here each day and to look at a record of an appeal, and to read opinions of our court or of the Supreme Court and to try to get the result and the opinion just right based on the facts and the law, that’s just a joy. There is no other work that I would rather spend my days at than this. And I hope that love I already have for this job will translate into good decision making and good opinions that will benefit the public and the state and the bar.”

“I get to hear cases and discuss cases with an outstanding group of judges who all take their jobs very seriously and take getting the right result very seriously,” Judge Wilson said.

The Court of Appeals hears cases assigned by the Supreme Court. Much of its caseload includes criminal appeals, family law cases involving child custody and Workers Compensation appeals involving injured workers.

“We are considered an error correction court as opposed to a court that decides unique or novel legal issues. As I appreciate it, our job is to try to ensure that cases decided in the courts all across this state are decided fairly and accurately and correctly according to the law. That’s a great honor to be involved in that process,” he said. “That’s a great responsibility and I am going to do my best and I’m going to work my hardest to do it well.”

He asked for prayers for wisdom and fairness. “If it’s God’s will, I hope that I’m on this court for many, many years to come.”

Before his appointment to the court, Judge Wilson practiced law with the firm of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP in Jackson and Mayer Brown LLP in Washington, D.C. “I’ve had an opportunity to work with some great lawyers, some outstanding lawyers who have influenced me, who have made me a better lawyer and a better person. I’m grateful to those people and for all they have done for me.” He singled out in particular Wayne Drinkwater and Steve Thomas, who attended the investiture.

Judge Wilson thanked his family for their encouragement and support. “I was blessed with two parents who spoiled me, not with things but with their time and their love and encouragement.” He thanked his children, Emily, Jack, and Henry, and his wife Amanda. “She helps me to remember what’s important in our life.”