

Mississippi Courts

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Judge John Weddle joins Mississippi Court of Appeals



Chief Justice Mike Randolph, at right, administers oath of office to Judge John Weddle, second from left. Andrew Weddle holds the robe and Karen Weddle holds the Bible.

Judge John D. Weddle took the oath of office at a ceremony in Tupelo on Oct. 11 and began his term on the Mississippi Court of Appeals on Oct. 14.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph administered the oath at the Lee County Justice Center. He presented Judge Weddle with a copy of the Mississippi Constitution. He noted that the judicial oath ends with “so help me God” and that the constitutions of all 50 states invoke the name of God. “Don’t be afraid to recognize God,” he said.

Court of Appeals

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Intervention Court Coordinator Consuelo Walley receives Chief Justice Award



Consuelo Walley, center, receives the Chief Justice Award on July 12. At left is Circuit Judge Dal Williamson. At right is Chief Justice Mike Randolph, who presented the award at the Bar Convention.

Eighteenth Judicial District Intervention Court Coordinator Consuelo W. Walley of Laurel is the

recipient of the 2024 Chief Justice Award.

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike

Randolph presented the award to Walley on July 12 at the Mississippi Bar Convention in Destin, Fla.

This is the 30th year of the presentation of the Chief Justice Award. The annual award recognizes individuals whose actions significantly impact the law, the administration of justice, and the people of the State of Mississippi.

Chief Justice Randolph selected Walley in recognition of her compassionate commitment to changing the lives of people who struggle with drug addiction.

Chief Justice Randolph said, “Ms. Walley and the 18th Circuit Court continue to be shining examples of how intervention courts

are supposed to work in, with, and for our communities. Ms. Walley has watched 110 participants graduate from this program and become productive members of society – many for the first time. She has witnessed 11 babies be born drug-free because of the work being done in our intervention courts. Those two statistics alone have saved the State of Mississippi over \$10.6 million.” Praising her dedication, Chief Justice Randolph stated, “She has helped 16 parents regain custody or visitation of their children. For that alone, she is to be commended.”

Circuit Judge Dal Wil-

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Judge Williamson says Walley transformed intervention court, *continued from page 1*

Williamson of the 18th Circuit Court said Walley is responsible for the success of the drug intervention court. “She has completely transformed our drug court into what I feel like is one of the best in the state. She has a perfect combination of a heartfelt commitment to help people recover while at the same time she has a firmness about her that lets people know that she is very serious about this program and that compliance is required,” Judge Williamson said.

Walley said that working with people who struggle with addiction is an opportunity to turn around the lives of individuals whom others have given up on. The walls of the intervention court building have become a hall of fame for program graduates, with before and after pictures and some of their essays. “We try to really celebrate them here and create an atmosphere where they don’t feel condemned; they feel celebrated,” she said.

Judge Williamson said the pictures of participants from near the start of the program and around three years later, near graduation, reflect the work that Walley invests in every one of them. “If you walk the halls of that building now, you see the commitment of Ms. Walley everywhere.”

Walley uses before and after pictures of graduates and their success stories as examples to help encourage new program participants who think climbing up out of addiction is impossible. She notes that participants also find

strong role models in the case manager and peer support specialist who are recovering addicts who have been clean for many years.

Judge Williamson said, “I’m fortunate enough to have a good team in place.”

Walley said, “It is hard work. Sometimes it takes everything you have and they still don’t get it. We’ve lost a couple of participants to overdoses, and that was excruciatingly painful.” She agonizes over those who have to be removed from the program and sentenced to prison for failure to comply with requirements. But she finds joy in the successes. Some of the graduates keep in touch with phone calls, texts, social media posts and visits. “It’s in those moments that I know that even though there are hard days and hard times and some of them don’t make it, there are a lot of them that are thriving and succeeding, and they would not be there if we had not done the work.”

Walley is called upon to mentor and train new intervention court staff in other programs across the state, said Pam Holmes, state Director of Intervention Courts. “Her servant heart carries over to her interest in helping other drug intervention courts. She has been a great asset.” Walley has visited intervention courts to train staff about drug testing and other duties. Some new intervention court coordinators visit the Eighteenth Circuit program to observe staffing and court sessions.

Walley was appointed by the Supreme Court to the State Intervention Courts Advisory Committee in January.

Walley uses her work to educate the community about drug addiction. She is a frequent speaker to civic groups and other gatherings. She works to change attitudes. “It has always been, ‘That’s somebody else’s problem.’ We’ve reached a point where addiction affects everyone. It’s hard to find a family or a church or a community that has not been affected by addiction. We can no longer sit and pass the buck to somebody else. It is not somebody else’s job to fix this,” Walley said. “We have to come together as a community, as a county, as a state, as a nation to start fighting against this.”

The 18th Judicial District Intervention Court was the subject of a documentary, “Unsung Heroes: The Jones County Drug Court.” Elise-Joelle Denoulet produced the documentary as a masters thesis project at the University of Mississippi. The documentary was nominated for the 2023 Social Impact Film Festival, and the 2024 Oxford Film Festival.

Walley, who was admitted to the practice of law in 1999, began her legal career defending against toxic tort lawsuits in asbestos and silica litigation. She joined a Laurel firm that represented plaintiffs, then practiced in her own firm for five years. She began teaching paralegal studies at Antonelli College in 2010, became chair of the Business De-

partment there, then taught as an adjunct instructor of paralegal studies.

She found her way from teaching into a faith-based ministry by way of a search for treatment resources for a loved one. The experience led her to Dying to Live Ministries at Christ’s Church of Laurel. She served as a volunteer for almost 10 years. She became curriculum coordinator, then served for more than a year as director.

Judge Williamson learned of Walley’s work and recruited her as Intervention Court Coordinator six years ago. They met at an intervention court participant’s wedding at Christ’s Church. Judge Williamson recalled that he noticed a woman to whom people seemed to gravitate. He asked who she was and recognized her name from her work in paralegal studies.

“I thought that is the perfect combination for somebody to lead my drug court – a person who has a heart for people in recovery but also has some legal experience. I began to think God’s got me at this wedding for more reasons than one.”

Walley didn’t immediately accept. Judge Williamson persisted. She began work as Intervention Court Coordinator in August 2018.

“When I wanted to choose law (as a career), I wanted to do it because I wanted to make a difference. I feel like this job has given me the opportunity,” she said. “If you had asked me in law school if I would ever end

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Court of Appeals welcomes newest judge, *continued from Page 1*



Presiding Judge Virginia Carlton, at right, welcomes Judge John Weddle to the Mississippi Court of Appeals.



Retired Circuit Judge Thomas Gardner, at left, visits with Judge John Weddle after the swearing in ceremony.

Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge Weddle, 55, of Saltillo, to a vacancy creat-

ed by the retirement of Judge Jim M. Greenlee of Oxford. The term will end

Consuelo Walley, *continued from page 2*

up in a job like this, I would have said ‘you’re crazy.’ Looking back, God ordered our steps here.”

“It’s not just a job for me. To me it’s a purpose for my life,” Walley said. “If I can be a small part of

helping them to change their life, I believe that is what God meant. It is a huge blessing to me to see someone who everyone else has given up on. They just need someone to show them the way out.”

on Jan. 4, 2027. A special election will be scheduled for Nov. 3, 2026, for Court of Appeals District 1, Position 1.

Judge Weddle said, “I want to thank the Governor for giving me the opportunity to serve on the Court of Appeals.”

U.S. Rep. Trent Kelly, who preceded Weddle as District Attorney, recalled recruiting him as an assistant district attorney in 2011. Weddle followed Kelly as District Attorney in 2015. Kelly said that Weddle has the aptitude for public service and the demeanor to be a Court of Appeals judge. “People have to know and believe they will be treated fairly,” he said.

Senior Chancellor Jacqueline Mask recalled working with Weddle for the past three years on the Themis Law Camp, a program that introduces high school students to careers in the legal profession. “When John Weddle tells you he’s going to do something, he does it,” she said.

The Governor appointed Jason D. Herring as the new District Attorney. “You have big shoes to fill,” Judge Mask told Herring.

Rep. Kelly told another story about Weddle’s shoes. “When he was in first grade, my wife had to tie his shoes.” Sheila Kelly now works as the victim-witness assistant in the District Attorney’s office. “She still has to tie his shoes,” he said jokingly.

Judge Weddle said that Rep. Kelly never misses an opportunity to tell that story. “My first grade teacher threatened to cut my shoe-

laces off,” he said. He wore brown Oxfords at the ceremony. “I looked down and they were a little loose.”

Judge Weddle thanked all who came to wish him well, especially his family: his parents, Rev. William S. Weddle and Elizabeth Weddle, his wife Karen Weddle, their son Andrew Weddle, his sister Annette Whatley, and his mother-in-law Patricia Cochran. Daughter Anna Grace Weddle was unable to attend. Rev. Weddle gave the invocation at the ceremony, and hugged his son in a warm embrace afterwards.

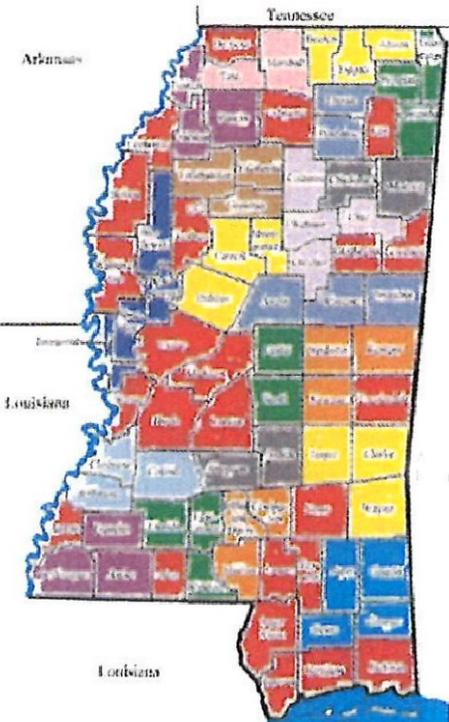
Judge Weddle thanked former Circuit Judge Thomas Gardner, who gave him some of his early legal experience by appointing him as Lee County Public Defender. He got a lot of experience in the courtroom.

He was appointed as Tupelo Municipal Judge before he became an Assistant District Attorney. He also served as Special Assistant District Attorney, where he focused on crimes against women and children. He has held leadership positions including Mississippi Prosecutors Association president and treasurer. He serves on the Corrections and Criminal Justice Task Force.

He grew up in Webster County. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Mississippi State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He was admitted to the practice of law in 1995.

Youth Court study calls for increased funding, offers 3 models

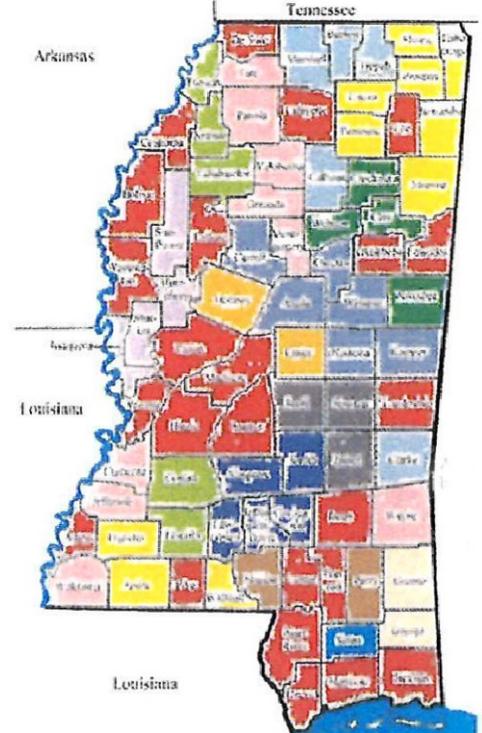
County Court Districts



Chancery Court Districts



Hybrid County/Chancery



The Mississippi Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures offered alternative proposals to change the system’s structure, but said nothing will really improve unless funding increases.

“Overall, the Commission wants to communicate

in the strongest terms possible that unless the Legislature makes a significant increase in youth court support funds such that every county is able to have adequate human resources to comply with statutory demands, there will not be significant progress in developing a more

uniform and effective statewide youth court system,” said the Final Report and Recommendations of the Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. The Report was presented to the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives on Sept. 16.

The Report explored district county courts, adding chancellors to be assigned youth court duties, and a hybrid combination of county and chancery judges.

The Report said, “The Commission carefully considered the advantages and disadvantages of several different court structures, including our current system with judges and referees. After many months of research and discussion, the Commission overwhelmingly chose to recommend a uniform system

where every youth court will have a full-time elected judge. The Commission herewith equally recommends a uniform system of a statewide county court district system or a statewide chancery system and/or hybrid chancery/county system for youth courts. Should the Legislature decide to keep the current system, the Commission has offered recommendations to improve the current system. With either plan, the Commission believes in the final analysis, the real decision comes down to how and if the youth courts will be adequately funded.”

The Report found that the state’s Youth Courts are underfunded and understaffed.

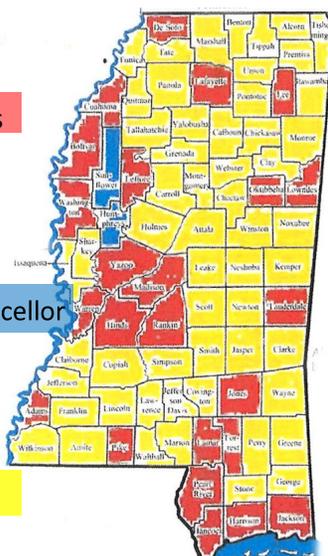
The current state appropriation is \$2.5 million for youth court support funds pursuant to §43-21-801.

Current Youth Court System

24 County Court Youth Courts

2 counties supervised by Chancellor

56 part-time Referee Courts



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Judge Staci Bevill

The Administrative Office of Courts distributes these funds with each county court receiving 68,000 and referee courts receiving \$15,000.

“This amount is grossly inadequate for the court system tasked with protecting children, redirecting youth, and preserving families when possible,” the Report said.

Data compiled by the Commission showed that counties contribute more than \$19 million annually to their respective youth courts, plus millions of dollars to fund detention centers.

“Regardless of a change in court structure or if the current system remains, unless the Legislature makes a significant increase in youth court support funds there will not be progress in developing a more uniform and effective statewide youth court system. Preferably, the youth courts should receive the same or more support funds as other statewide court systems considering the unique need for youth court intake and post-disposition court responsibilities” the Report said.

Lee County Court Judge Staci Bevill, Commission Chair, and Madison County Court Judge Staci O’Neal,



Judge Staci O’Neal

Commission Secretary, discussed findings and recommendations with the Senate Study Group on Women, Children and Families at the Capitol on Oct. 2.

Judge Bevill said, “Every family needs access to a full-time elected judge. We feel that children deserve that.”

Of the 82 youth courts, 24 have full-time elected county court judges, a chancellor hears youth court matters in two counties, and 56 counties have part-time attorney referees appointed by a chancellor.

Judges Bevill and O’Neal explained the mandatory short time lines for hearings in youth court. It’s sometimes impossible for part-time judges to meet those mandatory time lines, Judge Bevill said. “These time lines require full-time attention.”

Also, recent law changes increased the number of hearings to check on families’ progress. For instance, children under age 3 are required to have a hearing before a youth court judge every 60 days after removal from parents’ custody. Judge O’Neal said, “We are also here to tell you that a part-time attorney who is having court once a month cannot meet this require-

ment. It is impossible.”

Judge Bevill made it clear that she isn’t critical of part-time youth court referees. She praised them. “A lot of the referees we know count it as their community service. They are the champions in the work that we do but they need help,” she said.

Youth court referee salaries range from \$5,750 a year to \$54,000; the average is \$23,505. Judge Bevill suggested that, if the referee system remains, the salaries be raised to match those of Justice Court judges.

The Commission Report also focused on the need for more court staff. There are no youth court support staff in 38 counties. There is a youth court administrator for 25 of the courts, although some court administrators are responsible for county court as well as youth court duties. Only 32 counties reported paying a youth court intake officer.

At minimum, every county needs a youth court intake officer, the judges told legislators. The case volume requires it. There were more than 64,000 referrals to youth courts requiring judges’ involvement in 2023.

Judge O’Neal said, “If the Legislature wants to support the youth court system, no matter what kind of system it is, at a bare minimum, we would ask that you give enough money to each county to hire one full-time person to be that intake court administrator, so that judges are not sitting alone on the bench having to manage all of this without any help and looking at thousands of abuse and neglect cases, making decisions.”

The Commission Report proposed three options:

1. A statewide County Court District Plan - This plan would create county court districts, expanding beyond the existing 24 counties that now have county courts. The Commission did not attempt to draw district lines but used districts offered in Senate Bill 2081, which died in committee during the 2023 legislative session. Counties would continue to support the county court districts, but with increased support funds from the state.

2. A statewide Chancery Court System - This plan was first proposed by Gov. Tate Reeves as an extra chancellor in each chancery district designated for exclusive youth court jurisdiction. The Commission strongly recommended that if this plan were to be implemented, the districts or sub-districts need to be based on historical youth court referrals, case-loads and population.

3. A Chancery/County hybrid - This plan would leave existing county courts intact but any remaining counties without a county court would need to have a chancellor presiding over the youth court. Statutes regarding county court creation would remain as is and the cost of youth courts would be shared by county and state.

The Report is on the Mississippi Judiciary website at this link: <https://courts.ms.gov/research/reports/MS%20Youth%20Court%20Commission%20Report.pdf>.

The next legislative hearing on the Report is scheduled for Nov. 15 at 10 a.m. before the Senate Judiciary A Committee.

Chancellor Austin Terry sworn in on Aug. 2 in Meridian



Chancellor Austin Terry, at left, takes the oath on Aug. 2 as his wife, Krisann Terry, center, holds the Bible. Circuit Judge Charles Wright, at right, administers the oath.

Chancellor Austin Terry took the oath of office on Aug. 2 in Meridian. His term began Aug. 5.

“Drawing from the goals of my predecessors, I’m going to move the docket along,” Judge Terry told judges, friends and family who filled a courtroom at the Lauderdale County Government Center. He said that he will provide the same fair and equal treatment that other judges have given to everyone who comes before the Chancery Court.

Senior Chancellor Amanda Rainey said, “The docket in Lauderdale County has always been busy. I’m thrilled to have Judge Terry appointed to the bench. I know he will bring in some fresh ideas. He is a hard worker and has always treated everyone with respect and fairness. Lauderdale County and Clarke County have always been blessed with such knowledgeable chancellors. I know that Judge Terry will be of great service to the 12th Chancery Court District.”

Gov. Tate Reeves ap-

pointed Judge Terry, 32, to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Chancellor Charles Smith on June 30. Gov. Reeves will call a special election for on



Circuit Judge Wes Curry

Circuit Judge Wes Curry IV took the oath of office on June 6, and repeated the ceremonial oath at an investiture ceremony on Sept. 3 at the Forrest County Courthouse.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph administered the ceremonial oath before a packed courtroom.

Judge Curry said, “It was very humbling, to see

Nov. 4, 2025, for Place 1 of the 12th Chancery.

Former Judge Smith recalled Terry’s work representing clients as “conscientious, knowledgeable, eager and respectful....He had a common sense approach to matters and his temperament is well suited for a chancellor. I feel sure he will be a good and fair judge and will serve our counties well.”

Before going into private practice, Terry served as a Youth Court prosecutor and as a staff attorney for the 10th Circuit Court District.

Lauderdale County Court Judge Lisa Howell recalled his work as a Youth Court prosecutor. “He had a good rapport

with the kids. He always took the time to ask the right questions that were not too invasive but elicited the answers that we needed about home life.” That skill set will serve him well as he deals with families and children involved in domestic disputes before the Chancery Court, she said.

Chancellor Cynthia Brewer of Madison, chair of the Conference of Chancery Judges, said, “We welcome Judge Terry to the Chancery Court Conference and take pride in his entry to the judiciary.”

Judge Terry earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mississippi State University and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge Wes Curry appointed to 12th Circuit

so many people who have supported me over the years, for them to be able to come and celebrate this with me.”

Gov. Tate Reeves, who appointed Judge Curry, 49, of Hattiesburg, said at the investiture, “Judge Curry has very large shoes to fill, but I am confident at least partially based on the turnout today that he will fill those shoes every single day. When doing the interview, I was impressed with his background, his personal story and his achievements.”

Judge Curry began his public service as a Forrest County Justice Court Judge in January 2012. He was appointed Municipal Court Judge for the City of Hattiesburg in August 2017 while continuing to serve as Justice Court Judge. He resigned both

positions effective June 5.

The Council of State Governments Justice Center honored him in 2024 for his efforts to improve the systemic response for those who enter the justice system with behavioral health needs. He served as the Justice Court alternate member on the Commission on Judicial Performance, and as Secretary-Treasurer of the Mississippi Municipal Judges Association. He was president of the Hattiesburg Area Young Lawyers and the South Central Mississippi Bar Association, and served on the Board of Bar Commissioners.

Gov. Reeves appointed Judge Curry to the Circuit judgeship formerly held by Judge Jon Mark Weathers, who left the bench on April 30. Judge Curry will

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Chancellor Doug Crosby appointed to 6th Chancery Court



Chancellor Kiley Kirk, at right, administers the oath to Chancellor Doug Crosby. Lisa Crosby holds the Bible.



Chancellors Doug Crosby and Kiley Kirk pause for a photo.



Former Chancellor John Clark Love of Kosciusko, who retired in 2005, stands with new Chancellor Doug Crosby.

Chancellor Doug S. Crosby took the oath of office on Aug. 23 at the Attala County Courthouse

in Kosciusko to begin his term on the 6th Chancery Court.

Chancellor Kiley Kirk

administered the oath of office.

Judge Kirk said in a later interview, “His success means success for the chancery district. From my conversations with him, he’s working through balancing family life, while properly preparing for court—and navigating the transition from attorney to Chancellor.”

Gov. Tate Reeves appointed Judge Crosby to Place 1 on the 6th Chancery after Judge Joseph Kilgore left the bench. The Governor will call a special election to be held on Nov. 4, 2025. The district includes Attala, Carroll, Choctaw, Kemper, Neshoba and Winston counties.

The Governor in his

appointment announcement said, “Doug will do a great job as chancellor. His decades of legal experience will go a long way in helping him serve the people of our state. I thank him for stepping up to fill this important position.”

Crosby served for more than 20 years as Attala County Prosecutor. He served as prosecuting attorney for the city of Kosciusko and as Attala County Youth Court Prosecutor. He was also a school board attorney. He has practiced law since 1996.

Crosby earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mississippi College and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

Judge Curry investiture, *continued from page 6*

serve through Jan. 5, 2026. A special election for Position 2 of the 12th Circuit Court of Forrest and Perry counties will be held on Nov. 4, 2025.

Judge Curry said, “When I think about the goals that I’m setting for myself, it’s really just to make sure that the people of Forrest and Perry County have a court where people are treated equally before the law, no matter of where they come from, who they are, that they’re all treated equally. And that is some-

thing that I believe Judge Helfrich and Judge Weathers both have ensured, and I’m honored to get to continue on in that.”

Judge Curry grew up in Forrest County and is a graduate of Hattiesburg High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Mississippi and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law. He practiced law with his father, B.W. Curry III.

Chief Judge Barnes, Judge Mask, Judge Funderburk honored for service



Lee County Bar Association President Brandi Doss, second from right, is pictured with, left to right, Circuit Judge Paul Funderburk, Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna Barnes, and Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph on Aug. 16 at a ceremony in Tupelo in which the jurists were honored for 20 or more years of service.

The Lee County Bar Association and the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission honored three Tupelo area judges for 20 or more years of public service during a ceremony on Aug. 16.

Mississippi Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna M. Barnes of Tupelo, Senior First Chancery District Chancellor Jacqueline Mask, who lives in Pontotoc County, and Senior First Circuit District Judge Paul S. Funderburk of Tupelo were honored during a ceremony at the Lee County Justice Center. Aug. 16 marked 20 years to the day from when Judge Barnes started her service on the Court of Appeals. Chancellor Mask has served for 26 years, and Judge Funderburk has served for 22 ½ years.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph of

Hattiesburg, who gave the keynote address at the ceremony, was surprised by something that wasn't on the program: organizers honored him for his 20 years of service on the state's highest court.

Lee County Bar Association President Brandi Doss thanked each of the judges for their years of service. Judge Barnes had a groundbreaking role as the first woman Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. Judge Mask set a high standard and has been a mentor.

"Judge Funderburk has had a distinguished career and one of immense public service," Doss said. Chief Justice Randolph "has dedicated 20 years of service to the Mississippi Supreme Court and is the longest serving current member."

Senior U.S. District Judge Glen H. Davidson

told the crowd that eight of the 11 judges who have earned Presidential appointments to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi were former trial or appellate judges from the First Judicial District. "I think that's one indication of the quality and tradition that you follow," he said to the honorees. "I extend congratulations to you on reaching this milestone in your career."

Chief Justice Randolph said, "I realize northeast Mississippi has produced maybe the most accomplished women in Mississippi." He noted Chief Judge Barnes' high academic achievements: Bachelor of Arts degree, *summa cum laude*, and Juris Doctor, *magna cum laude*, both from the University of Mississippi. She also earned a Master of

Law from the University of Cambridge.

The Supreme Court Chief Justice selects who will serve as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. On his first day as Chief Justice, Randolph appointed Judge Barnes as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

Chief Justice Randolph said that he tried to persuade Judge Mask to seek a seat on the Supreme Court, but she chose to continue her service as a chancellor. He honored her with the 2021 Chief Justice Award in recognition of her leadership as Co-chair of the Access to Justice Commission, an organization created by the Supreme Court to improve access to justice for the poor.

Chief Justice Randolph repeated what he said when he presented the Chief Justice Award to Judge Mask three years ago: "Your tireless energy and dedication to assist the poor has improved access to justice for all. You have exceeded every standard by which all judges are measured."

In 2015, Judge Mask began scheduling a free legal clinic in every courthouse in the eight counties of the First Chancery District. The program spread. In 2020, the Access to Justice Commission and the Mississippi Bar received the E. Smythe Gambrell Professionalism Award from the American Bar Association for their efforts to provide free family law clinics statewide.

Chief Justice Randolph also applauded Judge Mask's work with the Ac-

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cess to Justice Commission and the Lee County Bar Association to encourage high school students to consider careers in law. In small towns across the state, there are few and sometimes no local lawyers to provide legal advice and assistance. The Themis Law Camp, held during the past three summers in Tupelo, introduced high school students to law as a profession.

Access to Justice Commission Executive Director Nicole McLaughlin of Tupelo thanked Judge Funderburk for his support of the Themis Law Camp, and thanked Chief Justice Randolph for being a zealous advocate for the work of the Commission.

Judge Barnes served for 10 years as a judicial representative on the Access to Justice Commission. "My eyes were opened to the need in our community by people who could not afford to hire lawyers," she said. She encouraged lawyers to consider serving as volunteers if they have not done so already.

Judge Mask said that she appreciates the lawyers across the district who volunteered at the family law clinics. She said, "Thank all of you for your willingness to answer my phone calls. I call all of you and ask you to volunteer."

Judge Funderburk thanked Chief Justice Randolph for his leadership of the judiciary. He said, "You are tireless in your efforts to get judges a pay raise that is competitive with other states."

He recognized and thanked elected officials and court staff: Alcorn County Circuit Clerk Crystal Starling, Monroe Coun-

Mississippi Court of Appeals will celebrate 30th Anniversary in January 2025

The Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi will celebrate its 30-year anniversary in January 2025.

Events scheduled for Jan. 9 will include a panel discussion with Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna Barnes, the court's first woman Chief Judge, and two of the original members of the Court of Appeals, Presiding Justice Leslie King, now of the Supreme Court, and Judge Leslie Southwick, now a judge on the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The panel discussion is scheduled for 3 p.m. to 4:30 in the Court of Appeals Courtroom in the Gartin Justice Building. A reception will follow from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the

second floor atrium. The panel discussion is approved for an hour of attorney continuing legal education credit.

A series of commemorative events are planned in the coming months. Anniversary programs will be incorporated into Court on the Road visits to universities and colleges. The Court also will host an appellate advocacy program for high school students in June.

The Court plans to record oral history interviews with former judges. State Librarian Stephen Parks and Court Public Information Officer Beverly Pettigrew Kraft will begin scheduling the interviews in January.

ty Circuit Clerk Dana Sloan, Pontotoc County Circuit Clerk Melinda Nowicki, other clerks who were unable to attend, Court Administrator Angela Stewart, Court Administrator Jill Reinhard, Court Reporter Paula Gibson, and Staff Attorneys Justin Moody and Bryce Montgomery. He said that Moody came highly recommended by Justice Randolph, for whom Moody had served as a law clerk. The Chief Justice said that Moody was a superior law clerk with an admirable academic record that included 14 American Jurisprudence awards.

Judge Funderburk said, "Judges cannot operate, we cannot hold court, we cannot make decisions without the support of a staff. We have the best staff in this court district that we have ever had."

He also thanked his wife LuAnne and younger son Wesley, who attended

the ceremony, and his fellow judges on the Circuit bench, Judge Michael "Chip" Mills Jr., Judge Kelly Mims and Judge John White.

Judge Funderburk quoted Socrates and local legend and sage Judge James Roberts. He began: "Socrates said four things make a good judge. One, to listen courteously. As to that, I tried to do this, but there was never anyone who did this better than former Supreme Court Justice Jimmy Roberts, (also) former Chancellor and former Circuit Judge, who we miss up here very much. Judge Roberts made a comment when he was being sworn in as circuit judge: 'I will be as nice as you let me, but as mean as I need to.' So that's not a bad outlook there. I've kind of adopted the Judge Roberts policy regarding the listening courteously. Jimmy would listen courteously, until he had heard

enough, and then he was not so courteous, and he never used a gavel, but when that big hand came down and slammed down on the bench, you knew he had listened courteously as long as he could."

The other three Socratic maxims for judges are to answer wisely, to consider soberly, and to decide impartially.

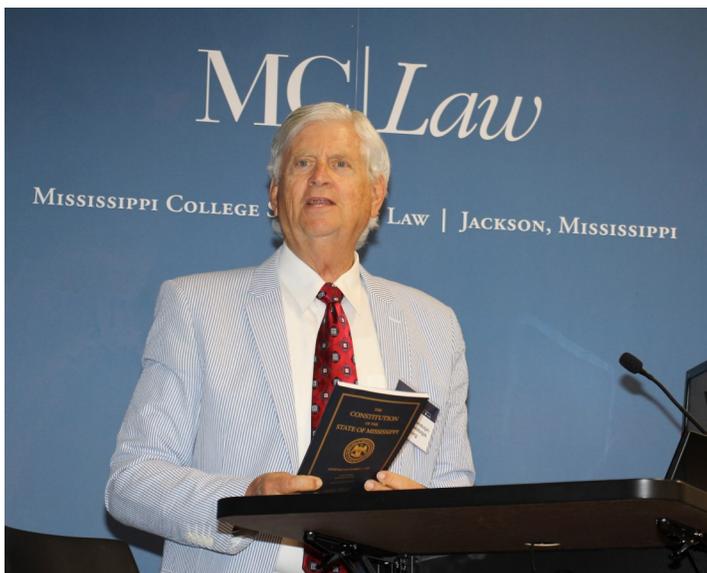
Judge Funderburk said, "It's been my honor and privilege to serve."

Chief Judge Barnes said, "It's an amazing honor to serve the people of Mississippi, especially in the judicial branch."

Judge Mask said, "I thank you for allowing me to serve. It has been the honor of my life."

McLaughlin and the honorees made it clear that the ceremony wasn't a prelude to anyone's swan song. They aren't done yet. Nobody is considering retirement.

Chief Justice Randolph administers professionalism oath to MC law students



Chief Justice Mike Randolph holds a copy of *Mississippi Rules of Court* as he speaks to law students at MC Law.



Randy Pierce, at right, listens as Mississippi College School of Law students recite the oath of professionalism.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Mike Randolph administered the Oath of Professionalism to 141 new law students entering Mississippi College School of Law during an orientation program Aug. 13 at the Jackson campus.

The law school, the Mississippi Bar and judges and lawyers from across the state gave law students an introduction to the high standards they must meet for character, civility, ethics, integrity and professionalism.

Chief Justice Randolph, who marked 50 years as a

member of the Mississippi Bar this year, told students to be of good character, be diligent and prepared in their studies and future law practice, and be humble.

He brought along the three books on which he relies: The Constitution of the State of Mississippi, the *Bible* and the *Mississippi Rules of Court*. The rules change frequently. The Constitution does not. “People interpret it as changing, but the words are the same.” He noted that the constitution of every state mentions God.

Chief Justice Randolph

quoted famous UCLA basketball coach John Wooden: “Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.” The Chief Justice added, “The best test of a person’s character is what he does or she does when no one is looking.”

He recalled a former classmate’s two-point measure of being fair and conscientious: how would you feel if the roles were reversed and you were on the receiving end of what you were about to do, and “would you want your mama to know what you just did?”

He recounted the advice that the late U.S. Senator Thad Cochran gave him when, as a newly appointed Justice in 2004, he sought out the veteran lawmaker for some pointers about running for public office. “And the advice he gave me was, ‘Be nice.’”

The Chief Justice told students to take stock of whether they are really committed to the highest standards. Discipline, even disbarment, awaits those who do not adhere to those standards. Some of the state’s most famous lost the privilege to practice law, he said. “I signed the paperwork.”

Mississippi Bar President Meade Mitchell of Ridgeland told students, “It’s your reputation. Take it seriously.” He cautioned against what he called “slash and burn, victory at all costs” lawyering. “There is just no place for hired guns,” he said. “There is no place for

Rambo lawyers.”

Mitchell spoke on behalf of the state’s approximately 10,000 lawyers during the 25th annual James O. Dukes Law School Professionalism Program. Mitchell called it one of the most meaningful programs of the Mississippi Bar. The late James O. Dukes of Gulfport was Mississippi Bar president 1999-2000.

Judges and attorneys from across the state spent part of the afternoon in small group discussions with law students. They discussed hypothetical situations that could become real life problems in the future practice of law.

Randy Pierce of Leakesville, a former Supreme Court Justice and Judicial College Director who serves as Assistant Dean of Advancement for Mississippi College School of Law, said, “They get to hear about professionalism from judges and practicing attorneys in a way that will help them as they travel through law school. The reputations they build in law school will follow them throughout their careers.”

Others judges who served as facilitators included former U.S. Magistrate Judge Linda Anderson, Harrison County Court Judge Alison Baker, Second District Circuit Judge Lisa Dodson, former Jackson County Court Judge Maxine Lawson-Conway, Workers Compensation Commission Administrative Law Judge Jennifer Nicaud, U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Parker, retired Pike County Court Judge John P. Price, and Ninth District Circuit Judge Toni Terrett.

Judges, lawyers talk to University of Mississippi law students about professionalism

One hundred and sixty-three new law students entering the University of Mississippi School of Law spent a day with judges and attorneys to get an introduction to the professionalism, ethics and integrity demanded by a career as a lawyer.

On Aug. 23, at the end of a week of orientation, the law school, the Mississippi Bar and judges and lawyers from across the state gave law students an introduction to the high standards they must meet.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph of Hattiesburg, who earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law, recalled sitting in a similar gathering at Lamar Hall 52 years ago. In a 30-year career as a lawyer, he tried cases in 14 states. He has served on the Supreme Court for the past 20 years.

Chief Justice Randolph shared wisdom and advice. He recounted the advice former U.S. Senator Thad Cochran gave him when he was newly appointed to the Supreme Court in 2004. He said, "Be nice."

He talked about the three books on which he relies: The Constitution of the State of Mississippi, the *Bible* and the *Mississippi Rules of Court*. "Every state (constitution) in the United States of America makes a reference to the creator or God," he said. He quoted a biblical standard for judges: In Exodus, Jethro told Moses to select men who were God-fearing, trustworthy and hated dishonest gain. In 1 Kings, Solomon asked God for wisdom and discernment.

"Never confuse



Chief Justice Mike Randolph, at left, answers questions from a small group of University of Mississippi law students after giving the keynote address at the professionalism program.

knowledge with wisdom," he said. And he gave students a dose of humility. The garbage collector is more important to you than you are to him. "Don't be full of yourself."

He repeated the motto of the U.S. Army 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One, in which he served as an air traffic controller at age 19 during the Vietnam war: "No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great. Duty first!"

Mississippi Bar President Meade Mitchell of Ridgeland told the students that the practice of law requires sacrifice, integrity and compassion. Being a good lawyer requires "service to humanity over all else," he said. "You should conduct yourselves with the highest standards of professionalism and honor." He urged them to practice civility, and cautioned them against what he called "slash and burn" tactics.

Judges and attorneys from across the state spent part of the morning in small group discussions

with the law students. They discussed hypothetical ethical situations and gave some advice based on years of practice.

Attorneys Paul Watkins of Oxford and Juan T. Williams of Southaven talked to eight students about topics ranging from avoiding conflicts of interest to dealing with unreasonable clients. The top two things that get lawyers in trouble and put them at risk of discipline, up to disbarment, are misuse of trust accounts and failure to communicate with clients, they said.

Watkins told the students, "Treat your colleagues with respect, the same respect you want to get....The backbone of the practice of law is collegiality."



Chief Justice Mike Randolph, at left, is pictured with law student Addison Carole Murphey of Batesville.

Watkins and Williams also talked about how to be a successful law student. "Treat it like a job," said Watkins, who teaches employment law as an adjunct professor. Williams told them that class participation counts, so raise your hand, and he advised them to take advantage of professors' office hours for additional discussion.

The new class of first-year law students has a

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Judges and lawyers talk to students about ethical scenarios



Left to right, law students Josh Lazaroe and Nick Polaszek, retired Court of Appeals Judge Jim Greenlee and law student Ben Brown share lunch during orientation on Aug. 23.



Law student Will Lawrimore, at left, of Hartselle, Ala., talks to Chief Justice Mike Randolph on Aug. 23.

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few more women than men. About 55 percent are Mississippi residents; 45 percent are out-of-state students, according to Dean Frederick Slabach.

Their interests and goals are as diverse as their backgrounds.

Tessa Andres, originally from St. Louis, Missouri, and a resident of Biloxi since 2016, hopes to work with the National Sea Grant Law Center at Ole Miss. Andres worked as an administrative assistant for the St. Louis based non-profit Inland Rivers, Ports and Terminals. She did

legal research and helped draft proposed federal legislation. With an undergraduate degree in political science and a minor in legal studies, she said, "I'm so excited to get the information that I need to move on to the next phase."

Will Lawrimore, whose undergraduate degree is political science and pre-law, is interested in air and space law or cybersecurity. He is from Hartselle, Alabama, 30 miles south of Huntsville, home of the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. He quizzed Chief Justice Randolph after the program.

They talked about the importance of studying hard and keeping current on reading. "He told me to keep God first. That's the most important thing."

Ryan Beallis of New Lenox, Illinois, earned an undergraduate degree in political science from Purdue University and worked in the Indiana State House. He's weighing business law or an area that would give him an opportunity to be a courtroom litigator. He considered law schools across the South before settling on Ole Miss. "I was sick of the Midwest winters."

Jamie Blanchard of Clinton earned an undergraduate degree in political science from the University of Mississippi. She was at one time interested in working in government, but decided that a business law concentration suits her better. Judges and lawyers' thoughts about civility resonated with her. "Be kind – it's like the basis of my personality."

Ben Brown of Starkville had lunch with recently retired Court of Appeals Judge Jim Greenlee of Oxford and students Nick Polaszek and Josh Lazaroe during the orientation program. "It's a really good icebreaker for a lot of the students and it's essentially our first networking experience," Brown said. He wouldn't mind eventually becoming a judge. Brown earned a degree in economics from Mississippi State University.

Polaszek, of Sarasota, Florida, said he was inspired by his uncle, who practices law in Tampa. He is interested in corpo-

rate law. He earned an undergraduate degree from Florida State University. Why law school in Mississippi? "I've lived in Florida my whole life. I see it as an opportunity to break out."

Lazaroe, of Covington, Louisiana, is interested in tax law or business law. He earned an undergraduate degree in accounting from the University of Mississippi. "I couldn't imagine going to law school anywhere else," he said.

Addison Carole Murphey of Batesville is the daughter of Circuit Judge Smith Murphey and Mississippi Judicial College Director Carole Murphey. She did not always want to go to law school. "My whole life, I tried to find a way around it." She now sees her background as a gift. She grew up hearing about law and legal concepts, but realized as a college student that many people have poor if any understanding of law and the rights to which they are entitled. As a student in the Honors College at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, she produced a four-part podcast called "Learning How to Read Your Rights." She graduated *magna cum laude*.

She believes that earning a law degree is the best way to work toward being a voice for the voiceless. "You have to be the change that you want to see in the world. I know that I want to help those who are not in positions to help themselves. I'm not sure what that is going to look like."

100 new lawyers take oaths to practice in state, federal courts



The first of two groups of new lawyers recite one of the oaths to practice law at a ceremony at the Supreme Court on Sept. 26.

One hundred new lawyers took their oaths to practice in state courts on Sept. 26 in two ceremonies at the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Board of Bar Admissions Vice-Chair Michael C. McCabe Jr. of Gulfport said that this year's two bar exams had the highest overall pass rate in nearly 10 years. Records show that 73 percent of the people who took the bar exam this year passed; a total of 208 people took the bar exam and 152 passed.

"I hope that it's comforting to know that you will never again be tested like that in the state of Mississippi," McCabe said, referring to the difficult two-day bar exam that all law school graduates must pass to be able to be licensed to practice law in Mississippi. "From here on out, your legal knowledge and skills will be tested by

the market for legal services. In particular you will be evaluated by your clients, your peers and the judges and juries that you might appear before."

New lawyers received hearty congratulations along with lots of advice regarding hard work, ethics, professionalism and public service from law school deans, Mississippi Bar officials and the judges who swore them in to practice law before the state as well as federal courts.

Dean Frederick Slabach of the University of Mississippi School of Law said, "I believe that the purpose of higher education, the purpose of law school is to transform the world by transforming lives, one student at a time....I also believe that lawyers are leaders, leaders not only for the bench and bar, but leaders more



Board of Bar Admissions Vice-chair Michael McCabe, at left, speaks at the Bar Admissions Ceremony. Seated are Dean John Anderson of Mississippi College School of Law and Dean Frederick Slabach of the University of Mississippi School of Law.

broadly in your community, and I know that all of you will become leaders in your community."

Dean John Anderson of the Mississippi College School of Law said, "This is the greatest honor that I get," to stand and call the

names of all the law school's graduates. He offered a prayer for them before reading the names.

Hinds County Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin administered the oath to practice before chancery

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Judges give advice before giving new lawyers oaths to practice

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and circuit courts. Before giving the oath, she gave some advice: practice law with passion and purpose, be prepared and polite, and believe in the power of prayer. Their legal representation will affect pivotal moments of peoples' lives. Having a spiritual foundation keeps life focused, centered and balanced, she said.

Judge Wise Martin also reminded the new lawyers that they owe a debt of gratitude to family, friends and neighbors who helped them through three years of hard work and study to graduate from law school and pass the bar exam. "None of us gets here alone."

Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens of Crystal Springs, who gave the oath to practice before the Supreme Court and Mississippi Court of Appeals, reminded new lawyers of responsibilities that they have to future clients to give sound, well studied advice, and admonished them to never do anything to endanger the law license that they just earned. Justice Kitchens, who earned his license to practice more than 50 years ago, said, "Your law license always will be one of your best and most valuable worldly assets." After giving a stern warning of things to avoid, he said, "Use your law license to make the world a better place."

U.S. District Judge Sharion Aycock, who presides in Aberdeen, said, "As you start this profession, I want you to em-

brace a heart of service. Embrace that service in your community because you are going to be leaders and your community needs you. I want you to do it with vigor; I want you to do it with passion; but most of all I want you to do it with integrity."

U.S. Magistrate Judge Lakeysha Greer Isaac, who presides in Jackson, said, "America has more lawyers than any comparable nation because America has more individual and economic freedom than any other country. It has more lawyers because America has made an unparalleled effort to see that those who are weak have the assistance of counsel when beset by the powerful. It has more lawyers because our citizens are neither intimidated nor shy about their rights. Lawyers are the vindication of those rights." She said that they as lawyers may offer pro bono service, defend unpopular causes, work in government service, and assist schools, churches and volunteer organizations. "For the people of Mississippi, you represent the hope that the rule of law and the fairness of our system will not only continue but that it will be improved upon through your efforts."

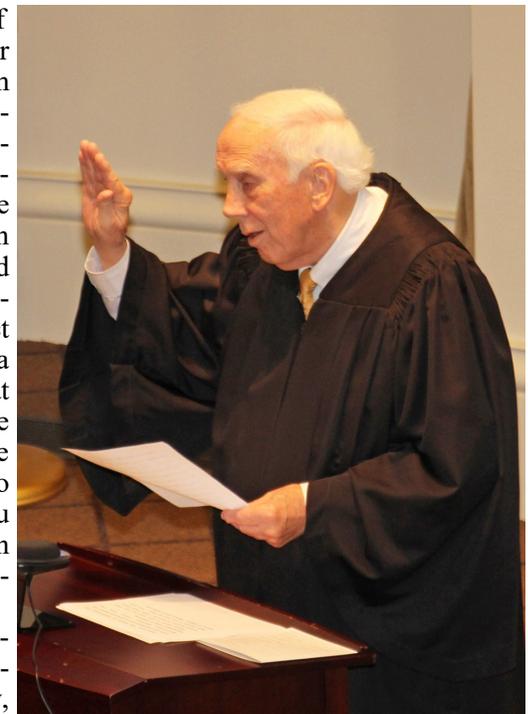
Brittany Brooks Frankel of Greenville, President of the Young Lawyers Division of the Mississippi Bar, encouraged each new lawyer to donate at least 20 free hours of legal representation each year. "We see people at their worst and we do our best to help them," she said. "Some of

the pro bono cases that I have taken are some of the most meaningful of my career."

Mississippi Bar President Meade Mitchell of Ridgeland said, "Lawyers are the trustees of our justice system. It is our job as lawyers to ensure that people are given equal access to justice and that their rights are protected." He emphasized the obligations and duties of being a lawyer and urged them to always practice professionalism and civility. "You are members of an honorable and noble profession. Conduct yourself in a manner that will give those that you serve and those who observe you confidence in our profession....Always conduct yourself with honor, integrity, civility, and fairness." He reminded them of the value of a good name. "Your reputation for hard work, honesty and fairness will do



Hinds County Chancellor Crystal Wise Martin administers the oath to practice in Chancery and Circuit courts.



Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens administers the oath to practice before the Mississippi Supreme Court and Court of Ap-

more for you than almost any other attribute."

14th Circuit Drug Intervention Court marks 25th year

Thirty-one people from Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties celebrated successful completion of the 14th Circuit Drug Court program on Aug. 26 at a ceremony that marked 25 years of operation of the state's oldest felony adult drug intervention court.

"That is a testament that the program works," District Attorney Brendon Adams told a crowd of program participants, family and friends who packed the Pike County Multi-Purpose Complex in Magnolia for the graduation ceremony.

The graduation also marked the first for the Veterans Court track of the 14th Circuit program. Four veterans were honored for completing the program. Col. Craig Weaver, U.S. Army, retired, presented graduation certificates to the four graduates.

Weaver told graduates, "Don't let your past define you. Let it mold you into the person you want to be."

He reminded graduates that the choices they make – even seemingly inconsequential ones – can have lifelong consequences. He gave a personal example. During his second year of community college, the program called for him to take a golf or tennis class. He asked for another option and got into ROTC. That led him to 24 years of service in the U.S. Army and 12 years of teaching teenagers in the JROTC program. He currently teaches at Lawrence County High School.

To the military veterans, Weaver said, "Thank you for your service to our nation."



Speakers and guests at the 14th Circuit Drug Court graduation are, left to right, Col. Craig Weaver, Sen. Jason Barrett, Sen. Gary Brumfield, Judge David H. Strong Jr., Rep. Becky Currie, Rep. Vince Mangold, District Attorney Brendon Adams, and Judge Michael Taylor.

Graduate Kary Duncan of Pricedale after the ceremony recalled facing hostility rather than thanks at the end of his military career. He wanted to kiss the ground when he landed at Travis Air Force Base in California after serving in Vietnam. He was a U.S. Air Force corpsman, evacuating the wounded. Protesters at the airport threw rocks and called servicemen dogs. "It shattered me. It shook me up." He recalled watching people cheer for returning military personnel at an airport years later. "The whole concourse stood up and clapped."

He landed in drug court nearly four years ago. Opioids prescribed for pain had led him into addiction. "Like a lot of people, I was not able to stop on my own." Participating in the intervention court program "gave me time for my head to clear."

Veterans treatment court



Kary Duncan of Pricedale receives his graduation certificate from Col. Craig Weaver during the 14th Circuit Drug Court graduation ceremony on Aug. 26 in Magnolia.

programs recognize that veterans' experiences are different from other intervention court participants. Programs for veterans utilize mentors who can relate to their military experiences. The programs connect veterans with treatment provided by the Veterans Administration.

The 14th Circuit program also has a separate track for DUI offenders. Two graduates were recognized at the ceremony.

Circuit Judge David Strong, who supervises the DUI track, said, "There are not many things that you do as a circuit judge that are more fulfilling than seeing a person succeed."

Circuit Judge Mike Taylor told graduates, "The choices which you made are what made you sober. We (in intervention court) provided – a nice way to put it – the incentive and structure to get you sober."

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Conference teaches requirements regarding custody of Native American children

Decisions about placement of Native American children from troubled families belong in tribal court, not state courts, experts on federal law told participants at the twelfth annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference.

Three Native American attorneys who are experts in the history and application of the Indian Child Welfare Act, ICWA, spoke to nearly 200 people on Aug. 28 at the Silver Star Convention Center, Pearl River Resort at Choctaw. Social workers, judges, court staff, tribal officials and other professionals who deal with Native American children in a Youth Court setting come together annually for the conference that educates about the steps which must be taken when they encounter a child who may

be Native American. The conference is hosted by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in collaboration with the Mississippi Judicial College, the Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts and the state Department of Child Protection Services.

Sheldon Spotted Elk, Senior Director of Judicial and National Engagement at Casey Family Programs, the nation's largest private foundation focused on foster care and improving the child welfare system, told conference participants that when there is reason to believe that a child is Native American, first steps are to make inquiry about ancestry, and to notify the tribe so that the tribe may intervene. "Make sure those things happen fast," he said. "Due diligence is really critical to your prac-

tice."

The Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services' policy is to immediately contact tribal officials. Ta'Shia Gordon, an attorney in the Office of Legal Counsel for CPS, said, "When we receive a report on the hotline, if there is reason to believe this is an Indian child, inquiry begins. Upon contact with the family, inquiry begins. We work diligently."

ICWA, established by the U.S. Congress in 1978, sets federal requirements regarding removal and placement of Native American children in foster or adoptive homes. The requirements apply to state child custody proceedings involving any Native American child who is a member of or eligible for membership in a federally



Sheldon Spotted Elk

recognized tribe. There are 574 American Indian and Alaska Native tribes recognized by the U.S. government.

ICWA aims to preserve tribal culture and safeguard the rights of Native American children to their heritage. Spotted Elk, who now lives in Denver, Colorado, is a member of the Northern Cheyenne Nation. He described the Sun Dance, an annual ceremony held at the time of the first full moon after the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. "It's really about us reconnecting with the earth...It's also renewing connections with one another. It's like Christmas."

Spotted Elk said, "It's impossible to be competent in everybody's culture. What you can do is be humble and be a listener." He told participants to recognize their own cultural biases and practice what he called "cultural humility." He said, "I believe that when you understand your bias, you can show up with compassion for families."

Cultural biases affect how one views families and their circumstances. Cultural differences should

14th Circuit Intervention Court graduation, *continued from page 15*

He said it's up to them now to work to maintain drug-free and sober lives. "This is what you make it. It is the beginning or the end."

Local legislators offered encouragement.

Rep. Becky Currie of Brookhaven cautioned graduates not to let down their guard and slide back into their old ways. Currie, a nurse for 45 years, much of that in emergency rooms, said, "I've pronounced a lot of people dead." Alcohol and drugs were involved in many of those deaths. She said addiction is a genetically inherited disease. "You have to fight this every day for the rest of your life. You inherited this disease."

Sen. Jason Barrett of

Brookhaven, who has represented clients in intervention court as a public defender, said the 14th Circuit Court is a tough program that controls participants' lives: what they can eat and drink, who they can associate with, and where they have to be at any given time. "The fact that you are here this morning is a testament to the strength and resolve that defines you."

Sen. Gary Brumfield of Magnolia said the things which brought them into intervention court are in the past, and "the best is yet to come." He told them, "Remember who you are, because God doesn't make junk."

Two graduates spoke of how faith helped carry

them through. Jason Ard of Jayess said his advice is "encouraging you to reach out in search of the truth. The truth is Jesus Christ. Put your faith in Jesus." Marcus Anderson of McComb said, "You can do anything through Christ. Let go and let God."

The program recognized four graduates posthumously, presenting their graduation certificates to family members. Three succumbed to cancer this year, and one died in an auto accident. Judge Taylor said that their records have been expunged, as they were in good standing in the intervention court. The crowd observed a moment of silence in their honor.

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“Not wrong, just different”: Tribal members caution against cultural bias



Ta'Shia Gordon

not be measured as good or bad. “It’s just a different way of seeing the world. It’s different. It doesn’t mean it’s wrong,” said Christina C. Bell Andrews, who helped develop Arizona’s ICWA guidelines.

Andrews is Executive Director of the Wassaja Carlos Montezuma Center for Native American Health at University of Arizona Health Sciences in Tucson. She previously served as a site manager for the Child Welfare and Juvenile Law Tribal-State Justice Partnerships program at the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She holds bachelor’s degrees in Spanish and Portuguese, master’s degrees in English, public health and business administration, and a law degree.

Andrews is a member of the Tohono O’odham Nation and affiliated with the Hia-Ced O’odham and Pascua Yaqui of the desert Southwest. Tohono O’odham means “Desert People.” Hia-Ced O’odham means “Sand People.” She talked about Indian children playing on dirt floors on a desert reservation that straddles New Mexico and Mexico. All the houses



Christina C. Bell Andrews

have dirt floors. There’s one community water faucet and homes have out-houses rather than indoor plumbing. That doesn’t mean that the children are neglected, she said.

For attorney and playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle, becoming a mother made ICWA take on new meaning. An enrolled citizen of the Cherokee Nation who grew up in Oklahoma, Nagle has spent her career litigating, advocating and writing about tribal sovereignty and protection of Native American women and children. She is now the mother of a 9-month-old.

“Without our children, there will be no tribal nations,” said Nagle, who lives in Washington, D.C.

ICWA “was passed in response to a crisis,” Nagle said. In the 1970s, “40 percent of Indian children were being taken from their families and their homes. Ninety percent of those placements were outside Indian Country....The goal of (ICWA) was to create guardrails.” Removal of children from tribal parents “can’t be just because they are speaking their indigenous language, or they don’t go to church,



Mary Kathryn Nagle

or they don’t have a certain standard of living.”

Generations of Native Americans are scarred by nearly two centuries of government practices that separated children from their families and their culture. More than 500 Indian boarding schools operated in 37 states. Children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to boarding schools. The schools’ programs sought to erase their native language and culture and replace those with English language, Christian religion and non-native culture. Children were punished for speaking their native languages or practicing tribal customs. Child-size handcuffs were found on the sites of several of the boarding schools. Children were abused, and suffered from disease and malnourishment. Thousands died in the board schools.

Seven of the boarding schools operated in Mississippi, Spotted Elk said.

Spotted Elk’s father and grandfather attended a day school but went home on weekends. His father told of having his mouth washed out with soap when he spoke his native

language, Cheyenne. Spotted Elk said that he and his two sons only learned to speak Cheyenne during COVID.

Andrews’ grandmother was taken while playing in the desert near her home. Her grandmother was taken away from her family, although her father was white. Her hair was cut and she was taught to clean, not to read. She described being taught English, a language that she compared to nails on a chalkboard. Later in life, she wouldn’t let her grandchildren speak her native language.

After the boarding schools closed, government practices continued to place Native American children in non-native foster care and adoptions. Congress enacted ICWA in 1978 in response.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld constitutionality of ICWA in a June 15, 2023, decision in *Haaland v. Brackeen*. Challengers were couples who wished to adopt or foster Native American children, a woman who wished for her child to be adopted by non-natives, and the states of Texas, Louisiana and Indiana.

More challenges are expected, said Nagle. A special interest institute and a high-powered law firm have made it known that they are looking for cases to use as vehicles to mount more challenges.

“I think that we are at a very pivotal moment,” Nagle said. “At the end of the day, this is going to come back to the Supreme Court. There is a lot at stake here.”

3 new members appointed, 3 reappointed to Access to Justice Commission



Joseph Kilgore



Blake Teller



Michael Carr



Chancellor Tiffany Grove



Julian Miller



David Haadsma

Former Chancellor Joseph Kilgore of Philadelphia, former Mississippi Bar President Blake Teller of Vicksburg and attorney Michael Carr of Cleveland have been appointed to the Access to Justice Commission.

Hinds Chancery Judge Tiffany Grove of Raymond and attorneys Julian Miller of Jackson and David Haadsma of Tupelo were reappointed to the Commission.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph issued the appointment order on June 27. The appointees will serve three-year terms set to end June 30, 2027.

The Commission, creat-

ed by the Supreme Court in 2006, works to develop and recommend policies, programs and initiatives which assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor.

Kilgore served for 14 years on the 6th Chancery Court, which includes Atala, Carroll, Choctaw, Kemper, Neshoba and Winston counties. He left the bench on July 31 to join the law firm of Watkins & Eager, PLLC, in Jackson. He served on the Commission on Guardianship and Conservatorship and was Co-chair of the Guardianship of the Estate sub-committee. He also served on the Mississippi

no legal services to various organizations in the community.

Teller concluded his term as president of the Mississippi Bar in July 2023. He was a member of the Board of Bar Commissioners, was Chair of the Real Property Section of the Mississippi Bar, and was president of Fellows of the Young Lawyers of the Mississippi Bar. He is a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation. He also served as president of the Board of Directors of United Way of West Central Mississippi, the Rotary Club, the YMCA Board of Directors and the Vicksburg-Warren Chamber of Commerce.

Carr serves on the Access to Justice Committee of the Mississippi Bar, where he was instrumental in creating and implementing a statewide rural clerkship program to encourage lawyers to practice in underserved areas. He is founder of the Criminal Defense Section of the Mississippi Bar. He previously served as a Bar Commissioner from the 11th Circuit and has served on various Bar committees. He is a member of the Mississippi Public Defenders Association and the JULIAN Legal Advisory Committee. He practices law in Cleveland. His practice areas include criminal defense and personal injury representation.

He also served as an adjunct professor at Delta State University, teaching Constitutional law, criminal Law, civil liberties, and the judicial process.

Judge Grove has served on the Access to Justice

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Supreme Court reappoints three to Board of Bar Admissions



J. William Manuel

The Supreme Court reappointed Mississippi Board of Bar Admissions members J. William Manuel of Jackson, Walter Alan Davis of Oxford and Michael C. McCabe Jr. of Gulfport to three-year terms that will end Oct. 31, 2027.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed the appoint-



Walter Alan Davis

ment order on Sept. 26.

McCabe is Vice-chair of the Board of Bar Admissions. Davis and McCabe have served on the Board for nine years. Manuel has served for six years.

The Board administers the rules and statutes governing admission to the practice of law in Mississippi. The Board oversees



Michael C. McCabe Jr.

preparation, administration and evaluation of two annual bar examinations. 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.

Manuel is a partner in the Jackson office of the Bradley law firm. His practice includes defense of products liability, employment litigation and commercial disputes. He is former President of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Board of Trial Advocates and former President of the Capital Area Bar Association. He received the 2019 Law-Related Public Education Award from the Mississippi Bar Foundation for almost 25 years of involvement with the Mississippi High School Mock Trial competition.

Davis is a partner in Dunbar Davis, PLLC, in Oxford. His practice includes family law and estates as well as business, employment and personal injury litigation for defense and plaintiffs. He is a member of American MENSA, former President of the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, former Chair of Lafayette-Oxford Foundation for Tomorrow and a member of the Board of Directors of the LOU Homeless Initiative.

McCabe, a member of the Butler Snow firm, represents individuals and companies in litigation including business torts, real estate disputes and contract disputes. He served for three years on the Committee on Character and Fitness. He was chair of the Mississippi Bar's Ethics Committee 2021-2022. He serves on the National Conference of Bar Examiners' Multistate Essay Examination / Multistate Performance Test Committee.

Access to Justice Commission appointments, *continued from page 18*

Commission since July 2020. She has served on the Hinds Chancery Court since January 2019. She practiced law for more than 13 years in general civil litigation, estate and fiduciary matters, banking, family law and personal injury litigation. The Mississippi Women Lawyers Association named her Outstanding Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2018. She was chair of the Women in the Profession Committee of the Mississippi Bar. She is former chair of the Capital Area Bar Association, CABA. She began her legal career as a law clerk for Court of Appeals Judge Donna Barnes.

Miller has served on the Access to Justice Commission since July 2021. He is

senior supervising attorney for the Southern Poverty Law Center's Economic Justice Practice Group in Jackson. He is founding clinical director and adjunct professor for the Education Law and Policy Clinic at Mississippi College School of Law. His former private practice included commercial, administrative, governmental, labor and employment, products liability, education and appellate litigation. Miller is former program coordinator for Dreyfus Health Foundation and was founder and director of the Delta Fresh Foods Initiative. He also helped found the Trinity Development Foundation and the Mississippi Chapter of Black Alliance for Educa-

tional Options.

Haadsma has served on the Access to Justice Commission since September 2022. He serves on the planning committee for civil legal clinics held in the eight-county First Chancery Court District and provides pro bono assistance at the two clinics held each year in Tupelo. He also serves on the planning committee for the Themis Law Camp for high school students. He is former president of the Lee County Bar Association. Haadsma practices law in the firm of Riley, Caldwell, Cork & Alvis in Tupelo. His practice includes general civil litigation, banking and finance, real estate, and wills and estates.

Supreme Court reappoints three to Commission on CLE



Sam H. Buchanan

The Mississippi Supreme Court has reappointed attorneys Sam H. Buchanan of Hattiesburg, Elizabeth Lee Maron of Ridgeland and Robert Michael Tyner Jr. of Sumner to the Commission on Continuing Legal Education.

The nine-member CLE



Elizabeth Lee Maron

Commission has supervisory authority over the administration of rules regarding continuing legal education requirements for attorneys in the state of Mississippi. The objective of the CLE Commission is to ensure that each member of the Mississippi Bar complies with the CLE



Robert Michael Tyner Jr.

rules and meets mandatory CLE requirements. The Supreme Court sets the rules for CLE training.

Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed the appointment order on June 19. New terms for Buchanan, Maron and Tyner began on Aug. 1, 2024, and will end on July 31, 2027.

Buchanan is executive director of the Mississippi Center for Legal Services. He has served in that capacity for more than 35 years, overseeing a staff of attorneys who provide free civil legal representation to low-income persons in 43 counties of central and south Mississippi. He has served on the CLE Commission for 15 years.

Maron is a partner in the law firm of Adams and Reese, where she advises clients in the areas of education law and employment law. She counsels school districts, community colleges and universities, and defends companies and public entities in employment and education related litigation. She has served on the CLE Commission for almost 21 years; she was appointed in September 2003.

Tyner has a civil law practice in Sumner. His practice includes real estate, estate planning, guardianships and conservatorships, malpractice litigation and personal injury litigation. He has served on the CLE Commission for six years.

Ward is new CLE, Certified Court Reporters Administrator



Angela Ward

Angela Ward of Brandon recently assumed the duties of Administrator of the Mississippi Commission on Continuing Legal Education and the Board

of Certified Court Reporters.

Ward returned to the legal field after working for more than seven years as administrative assistant to the CEO of the non-profit Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks Foundation. Earlier, Ward worked for almost 13 years as a paralegal at the Jackson law firm then known as Forman, Perry, Watkins, Krutz

and Tardy.

The Commission on Continuing Legal Education is responsible for the administration of the Rules and Regulations for Man-

datory Continuing Legal Education. The Board in 2023 approved live CLE offerings including 312 in-state and 1,209 out-of-state programs; 4,139 CLE programs were given by satellite, teleconference or online through live webcasts and on-demand programs.

The Board of Certified Court Reporters oversees licensing of certified court reporters and the granting of temporary permission to noncertified and nonresident court reporters. In 2023, there were 261 certified and noncertified reporters; four new noncertified reporters were working on their certification. There were 21 nonresident court reporters.

Better Chancery Practice Blog is back!!

New postings to the Better Chancery Practice Blog began on Sept. 20, thanks to Mississippi College School of Law Professor Donald Campbell.

In his first post, Prof. Campbell said that he has the blessings of blog creator retired Chancellor Larry Primeaux.

“There is no doubt that Judge Primeaux’s blog was a go-to for all things chancery (and beyond) for

Judges Young, Sorey, Lumpkin appointed to Judicial Performance



Judge Veldore Young Graham

Lauderdale County Judge Veldore Young Graham of Meridian, Circuit Judge Stanley Sorey of Raleigh and Circuit Judge Richelle Lumpkin of Carriere are recent appointees to the Commission on Judicial Performance.

House Speaker Jason White recommended Judge Young Graham to serve as the county judge member of the Commission to take the position previously held by Judge Lumpkin after Judge Lumpkin was appointed to the 15th Circuit Court. Judge Lumpkin was then appointed as the circuit judge alternate member on the Commission.

Blog, continued from page 20

years,” Prof. Campbell wrote.

Board of Bar Admissions Vice-chair Michael McCabe pointed new lawyers to the revived blog at the recent Bar Admissions Ceremony.

University of Mississippi School of Law Senior Faculty Member Deborah Bell is a contributor. Chancellor Troy Odom has also contributed.

The blog is at <https://betterchancery.com/>.



Judge Stanley Sorey

Gov. Tate Reeves recommended Judge Sorey and Judge Lumpkin to serve on the Commission. Chief Justice Mike Randolph signed their appointment order on May 31. Their terms on the Commission are set to end on Dec. 31, 2027.

Chief Justice Randolph signed the appointment order for Judge Young Graham on April 11. She will serve on the Commission until Dec. 31, 2026.

Judge Young Graham has served on the Lauderdale County Court bench since January 2007. She has served as secretary of the Conference of County Court Judges since 2012, and as secretary of the Council of Youth Court Judges from 2017 until September 2024.

She served for seven years as assistant district attorney and for two years as a public defender for the 10th Circuit Court District. She was the first African American female public defender for Lauderdale County, and the first African American assistant district attorney for Lauderdale County.

Judge Sorey replaces



Judge Richelle Lumpkin

Judge Smith Murphey V of Batesville, who recently left the Commission. Judge Murphey became an alternate member in February 2020 and a member of the Commission in April 2021. Judge Sorey had served as the Circuit Judge alternate on the Commission since April 2021.

Judge Sorey has served on the 13th Circuit Court bench since January 2016. He is senior judge of the district that includes Covington, Jasper, Simpson and Smith counties. He was in private law practice for more than 16 years before he was elected Circuit Judge. He served as Smith County Prosecutor and municipal prosecutor for the towns of Mize and Taylorsville. He was board attorney for the Smith County Board of Supervisors for 10 years. He was president of the Smith County Bar Association for 14 years.

Judge Sorey served for six years in the Mississippi National Guard, including active duty during Operation Desert Storm.

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi College and a law degree from Mississippi

College School of Law. He also attended Jones County Junior College, Copiah-Lincoln Community College and the University of Southern Mississippi.

Judge Lumpkin was appointed as the County Court alternate member on the Commission in March 2016, and was appointed to a six-year term as a member of the Commission in January 2021. She stepped down as the County Court representative on the Commission before her appointment as Circuit Judge of the 15th Circuit Court in February.

Judge Lumpkin was the first person to serve as County Court Judge for Pearl River County after the Legislature authorized creation of a County Court to relieve a crowded Circuit Court and Youth Court docket. She took office in 2011 and served until the Governor appointed her to the Circuit Court. She previously served by appointment of the Chancery Court as Youth Court referee for eight years, and served as Municipal Judge for the City of Picayune for four years. She also served for eight years as Pearl River County Prosecutor.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Southern Mississippi and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

The Commission on Judicial Performance investigates allegations of judicial misconduct and makes recommendations for discipline to the Supreme Court. The Commission includes seven members and seven alternates.

Hinds County Youth Court reports fewer children in custody

In Hinds County, fewer youth are being detained, recidivism has declined, and fewer youth are in state custody, Youth Court Judge Carlyn Hicks said in her State of the Child address on Oct. 21.

The changes are the result of collaboration between the court, law enforcement and the community, Judge Hicks told a crowd of public officials, officers, social workers and volunteers who packed the Henley-Young-Patton Juvenile Justice Center.

“By partnering with community-based organizations, we have supported

intensive life skills and enhancement programming that empowers our youth to not simply survive their environments, but thrive as they create the futures they envision for themselves,” she said. “We have spent time these past two years cultivating a coalition of individuals, partners and organizations to meet our youth where they are.”

She said that 148 young people were referred this year to mentorship programs and organizations like “Can I Live,” “Living with Purpose” and “Strong Arms of Mississippi.”

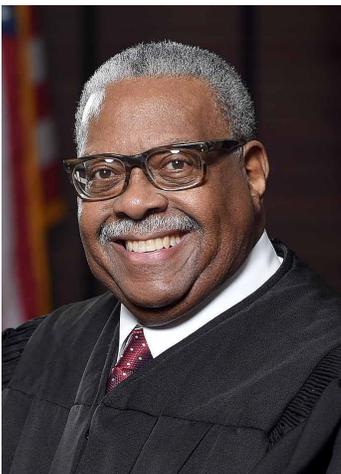


Judge Carlyn Hicks delivers State of the Child address on Oct. 21.

“I am proud to report that we’ve seen a consistent decline in youth

arrests and recidivism rates since 2022, with youth *continued on Page 23*

Four appointed to Board of Certified Court Reporters



Presiding Justice Leslie King

The Supreme Court reappointed two members to the Board of Certified Court Reporters and appointed two new members.

The Supreme Court reappointed Presiding Justice Leslie D. King of Greenville, who is chair of the Board of Certified Court Reporters, and attorney Latanya Allen of Madison. New appointees are court reporters Candace O’Barr Jones of Jackson and Kati Vogt of Biloxi.



Latanya Allen

Presiding Justice King was renominated by colleagues on the Supreme Court. Allen was renominated by the Mississippi Bar. Jones and Vogt were nominated by the Mississippi Court Reporters Association. All appointive terms on the Board extend through June 30, 2026.

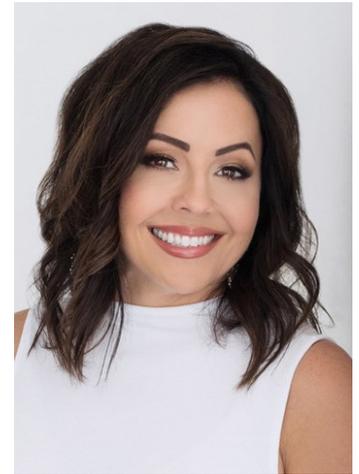
Presiding Justice King has 29 years of appellate judicial service. He was appointed to the Supreme Court on March 1, 2011,



Candace O’Barr Jones

after serving on the Mississippi Court of Appeals for more than 16 years. He was Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals for almost seven years.

Allen, who has her own law practice, previously served as a court administrator for the 11th Chancery District for two years, then as an official court reporter for the 11th Chancery for five years. She is former president of the Mississippi Court Report-



Kati Vogt

ers Association.

Jones is president-elect of the Mississippi Court Reporters Association. She is a freelance court reporter and co-founder of eDepo. She has served as a court reporter for more than 30 years.

Vogt is an official court reporter for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi in Gulfport. She has been a court reporter for 25 years.

Continued from Page 22
recidivism down by 10.6 percent,” she said. Fewer are returning to detention after arrest, and fewer are being arrested in the first place. “The revolving door of juvenile detention is slowing, and in the future, revolving no more.”

Part of the decline is attributable to referrals to mental health care rather than detention to those who need treatment. Hinds Behavioral Health conducted 268 mental health assessments, and Marion Counseling, 172 mental health assessments for

young people involved with juvenile delinquency matters. Nfusion Metro provided services to 471 youth since August 2020. There was an 80 percent decline in criminal justice involvement among youth served.

Multidisciplinary meetings with school district officials tackled truancy. Jackson Public Schools developed educational programming for middle school students who are much older than their classmates. The programs are designed to reduce chronic absenteeism and

dropping out of school. The Youth Court also refers young people to GED programs, Job Corps and other programs.

In 2023, the Hinds County Youth Court conducted 6,742 hearings; through Oct. 15 this year, there have been 6,144 hearings. There was a decrease in youth referrals between 2023 and 2024 – from 2,209 to 1,126 – “indicating that together, we are increasingly triaging and effectively meeting the needs of our youth in the communities where they live,” Judge

Hicks said.

The Department of Child Protection Services conducted 3,610 investigations into allegations of child abuse and neglect since 2023. It is hoped that the recent creation of a Court Appointed Special Advocates, CASA, team for Hinds County will provide support for vulnerable children.

The number of Hinds County children in foster care averages fewer than 220 a day, compared to 396 foster youth when Judge Hicks was appointed

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Council of Youth Court Judges elects three new officers



Judge Staci Bevill

The Council of Youth Court Judges elected new officers at its September conference in Flowood. Lee County Court Judge Staci Bevill is chair of the Council, Marion County Youth Court Referee Renee Porter is vice-chair, and Lafayette County Court Judge Tiffany Kilpatrick is secretary.

Judge Bevill is chair of the Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. She was elected to the Lee County Court in November 2018, and took office in January 2019. She was admitted to



Judge Renee Porter

the practice of law in 1998. She attended Mississippi State University on a John C. Stennis Scholarship, and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, magna cum laude. She earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Judge Porter has served as Marion County Youth Court Referee since June 2021. During that time Marion County saw a decline of children in custody of more than 80 percent. She previously served for more than 10



Judge Tiffany Kilpatrick

years as a guardian ad litem in Youth Court. She is a member of the Commission on a Uniform Youth Court System and Procedures. She has practiced law since 1989. Her practice is in domestic relations and family law. She earned a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

In addition to serving as Council of Youth Court Judges secretary, Judge Kilpatrick is chair of the Council’s Bylaws and Cur-

riculum committees, and sits on the Youth Court Rules Committee. She was recently appointed to the Curriculum Committee of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. Judge Kilpatrick, of Oxford, was elected to the Lafayette County Court in November 2022, and took office in January 2023. She serves as County Court and Youth Court judge. She previously served as assistant district attorney for Lafayette County, public defender for Lafayette County at the felony level, Youth Court public defender, and prosecutor for the city of Abbeville. She taught legal research as an adjunct professor at the University of Mississippi School of Law for nine years. She was a law clerk for U.S. Magistrate Judge S. Allan Alexander of the Northern District of Mississippi. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Mississippi and a Juris Doctor, cum laude, from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Courthouses getting signs regarding rights to an interpreter

Signs are going up in courthouses around the state notifying limited English proficient people that they are entitled to have a free interpreter in court proceedings.

The signs are written in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Arabic, Tagalog, German, Korean and Gujarati, languages most frequently spoken besides English in Mississippi.

The initial counties to receive signs were Warren, Claiborne, Jefferson, Adams, Lee, Itawamba, Prentiss, Tishomingo, Alcorn, Tippah, Pontotoc, DeSoto, Carroll, Montgomery, Grenada and LeFlore. All counties will receive the signs for posting in Circuit, Chancery, County, Youth, Justice and Municipal Courts.

Deenie Miller, Director of Language Access for the Administrative Office of Courts, visited with court personnel to deliver the signs and explain statutory changes regarding the rights of people with limited English proficiency. Miller said, "It has been a great experience visiting each courthouse. The judges, clerks and court staff that I have had the opportunity to meet with have been very appreciative of the signs and the in-person visits. I have been able to answer questions and offer guidance regarding some of the logistical issues that clerks face with finding and scheduling interpreters. I look forward to continuing my travels throughout Mississippi to visit

each courthouse in the state."

State laws which went into effect on July 1, 2023, require qualified language interpreters for people with limited English proficiency in court proceedings in order to provide access to assistance at no charge for those who are limited in their understanding of English or who speak English as a second language. Court appointment of a qualified interpreter is required in criminal and civil cases, with the cost borne by the county or municipality. Requirements for access to a qualified interpreter include any instance arising out of or pertaining to the individual's involvement in litigation, extending to litigants and wit-

nesses in all phases of litigation, including hearings and depositions.

In an effort to increase the number of credentialed interpreters, AOC recently moved to offering its introductory interpreter seminar free via ZOOM; 38 people participated in the Oct. 15-16 seminar.

AOC and the Access to Justice Commission also have made progress in translating civil forms and informational flyers to assist *pro se* litigants. Forms have been translated in Spanish and Vietnamese. Translated sample forms are available on the Mississippi Judiciary website at this link: <https://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/translations.php>.

Hinds County Youth Court State of the Child, *continued from page 23*

to the Court in July 2020. From 2022 through 2023, 113 foster youth achieved permanency through reunification, adoption, custody with a relative or durable legal custody. Since 2023, 41 adoptions have been completed, with only one child awaiting adoption.

Judge Hicks recognized more than 50 people for their efforts in making the improvements possible. She presented Champions for Children Awards, Torch Bearer Awards and Distinguished Service Awards.

Jackson Police Chief Joseph Wade was the first among about two dozen people honored as Champions for Children. Judge Hicks said to Chief Wade, "I appreciate all that you do on behalf of children in Hinds County."

Other Champions for

Children award recipients include Jackson Police officers RaKasha Collins, Rebecca Lomax, Joanna Archie and Capt. Christian Vance; Capitol Police officers Tomeika Bowling and Judson Magloire; Clinton Police officer Mike Huff; Hinds County Sheriff's officers Juwanda Horton and Marquette Wells; Jackson Public Schools safety officer Corliss Harris; Juvenile Justice Center officer Joanne Waits; Department of Child Protection Services staff Cassandra Frost, Grace McIntyre and Brittany Tate; Sonya Dixon of the Division of Youth Services; educators Brandie Finley of the Youth Court School and Funmilayo Tilden of Callaway High School; Marshun Moore and Benny Ivey of Strong Arms Mississippi; John

Knight of Living with Purpose; Kansas Gray and Coke Bumaye of Can-I-Live; Stephen Brown of Briarwood Arts Center; Fernice Galloway; juvenile defenders Brandon Dorsey and Angela Gray Marshall; assistant county prosecutors Rafael Green, Jessica Roundtree, Eric Tanner, Yemi Kings, Raymond Fraser and Louis Clifford; and Bryant Guy.

Torch Bearer Award recipients are Youth Court staff members Cynthia Moore, Angelia Wallace, Crystal Allen, Loretha Harris, Earnestine Wine, Jhasmine Andrews, Robbie Hooker, Andre Flowers and Ron Jones.

Distinguished Service Award recipients included First Responder of the Year, Hinds Behavioral Health Services Crisis Mobilization Unit; Volunteer

of the Year 2024, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Hinds County; Volunteer of the Year 2023, the Beta Alpha Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; Nonprofit Partner of the Year, Living with Purpose; Community Champion, Hinds County Children's Coalition; Diversion Pioneer Awards, Judson Maglorie and Juwanda Horton; Foster Parent of the Year, Mallory Cooley; Faith-based Partner of the Year, Progressive Missionary Baptist Church; Beyond the Call of Duty Award, Ronald Jones Jr.; and Top Cop for Children, RaKasha Collins.

Judge Hicks thanked program participants Rev. Arthur A. Sutton, educator Landon Carter Price, and Amanda Furdge.

Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Ed Pittman died on September 25

Former Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Edwin Lloyd Pittman died on September 25 at his home in Ridgeland. He was 89.

A funeral service was held on Oct. 2 at Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson.

In his 40 years of public service, Pittman was elected to positions in all three branches of state government. He joined the Mississippi Supreme Court in January 1989. He became Chief Justice in January 2001. Chief Justice Pittman retired from the Court on March 31, 2004.

During his more than three years as head of the state court system he worked tirelessly to improve efficiency and transparency of the courts; to protect judicial independence and strengthen ethics, impartiality and fairness within the judiciary and the legal profession; and to improve access to justice for the poor.

Former Chief Justice Bill Waller, Jr., said, "Chief Pittman provided exemplary leadership to the Mississippi Judiciary as Chief Justice. His accomplishments for efficiency, transparency and access to justice had a profound effect on our legal system. He championed the establishment of aspirational time standards for the court processes, brought rule changes to allow cameras in the courtroom and improved access to justice for the poor and disadvantaged, to name a few. The court system today is better for his untiring efforts and dedication to duty."

Judge James Graves of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said, "He was a consummate politician and public servant. He's an important figure in Mississippi's history." They served together on the state Supreme Court. Judge Graves' early public service was in the Mississippi Attorney General's Office when Pittman was Attorney General. "He hired me as a special assistant attorney general when he was AG."

Pittman was Attorney General from 1984 to 1988. He began his public service as a state Senator from Hattiesburg, serving in the Mississippi Senate from 1964 to 1972. He served as State Treasurer from 1976 to 1980, and as Secretary of State from 1980 to 1984. He also retired from the Mississippi National Guard as Brigadier General with 30 years of service.

He was the 2019 recipient of the Mississippi Bar's Lifetime Achievement Award, the top honor given by the Bar. Gov. Haley Barbour awarded him the Mississippi Medal of Service. At the Sept. 28, 2011, ceremony, Pittman said, "The people of this state have honored me with a wonderful trip through life."

Chief Justice Mike Randolph said, "Even though he served in all these important government positions, he never lost his common touch. I regret that I didn't get to serve with him. I hope that when I'm done, that I will be as well thought of as he was." Gov. Barbour appointed Chief Justice Ran-



Former Chief Justice Ed Pittman talks during a visit to the Supreme Court on July 25, 2013.

dolph to the Court when Chief Justice Pittman retired.

Attorney Danny Cupit said, "He served with distinction in all three branches of government for almost a half century. His loss is Mississippi's loss. I was proud to have known him." Their friendship developed around politics nearly 50 years ago. Cupit, a longtime Democratic Party activist, recalled that Pittman agreed to make speeches in support of Presidential candidate Jimmy Carter when other state elected officials were a bit shy. Pittman was candid in his views. "I admired that. He did what he thought was right," Cupit said.

Law partner Jerry Mills said, "Judge Pittman was a

lawyer of vast experience. But more importantly, he was a friend and a trusted colleague."

Pittman joined the Ridgeland firm of Pyle, Mills, Dye & Pittman, now known as Mills, Scanlon, Dye & Pittman, shortly after he retired from the Supreme Court. Pittman was of counsel. Attorney John Scanlon said, "We were very fortunate to have the benefit of Justice Pittman's vast experience in all three branches of government, and he always provided helpful insight when we were analyzing cases and legal issues."

Pittman grew up in a family of public servants in Hattiesburg. His uncle

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Ed Pittman grew up in politics and a family of public servants

Continued from page 25

Claude Pittman was Mayor of Hattiesburg, and his uncle Homer Pittman was Forrest County District Attorney. At age 13, Pittman served as a page in the U.S. House of Representatives for Congressman William Colmer. Pages lived in a boarding house near the Capitol and attended a school for pages in the attic of the Library of Congress. During his own political career, his wife and children campaigned for him all over the state. A year after he ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic nomination for Governor, he was elected to the Supreme Court.

While the Supreme Court decided thousands of appeals during Pittman's more than 15 years of judicial service, his legacy is written in the court rule changes which he oversaw as Chief Justice.

Pittman believed in government transparency and public access. Within three months after he became Chief Justice, on March 30, 2001, dockets of the Supreme Court and Mississippi Court of Appeals began being published on the web site of the Mississippi Judiciary. He led efforts to install camera systems in the appellate courtrooms. The Court's internet broadcast of Supreme Court oral arguments began April 2, 2001, and Mississippi Court of Appeals oral arguments began being broadcast on Aug. 7, 2001. At a time when only a handful of states allowed news media cameras in courtrooms, he formed a study committee and

tasked them with figuring out best practices. Broadcasts and pictures of courtroom proceedings are commonplace today, operating under camera coverage rules which went into effect July 1, 2003, under his leadership.

He sought to speed up the process by which criminal and civil matters were resolved in the courts; advisory time standards for trial courts were adopted on Nov. 20, 2001.

He spearheaded efforts to revise the Code of Judicial Conduct; revisions which went into effect April 4, 2002, represented the first major revisions to Mississippi's judicial canons since they were adopted in 1974. Among the revisions were amendments which addressed judicial election campaign conduct. Those rule changes included revisions regarding recusal motions in trial courts. Also adopted in April 2002 was a revision to rules for attorney discipline which prohibits readmission to the practice of law by lawyers convicted of felony crimes of deceit and certain drug crimes.

In announcing those rule changes in April 2002, Chief Justice Pittman said, "The adoption of these rule changes first gives the public some protection that Mississippi's system of justice will remain a system of integrity and honor, and, secondly, they protect the individual judge's environment....We are trying to assure judges that they are free from outside influences and that they can bring their knowledge and their integrity to every case."

Rule amendments and commentary adopted on Feb. 20, 2004, addressed consolidation, joinder and venue in civil litigation. The rule changes came at a time when mass tort cases were being filed with hundreds of plaintiffs, including out-of-state residents, suing companies with little or no connection to specific venues.

Chief Justice Pittman was also deeply concerned about access to the courts by people who could not afford civil legal representation. He laid the groundwork for what would later become the Access to Justice Commission when he convened a meeting of lawyers, judges and other elected officials and religious leaders to discuss ways to improve the delivery of civil legal services to the poor. At that meeting on Sept. 6, 2002, Chief Justice Pittman said, "We have to recognize the fact that we in many communities are frankly failing to get legal services to the people who need it....It's time that the courts help shoulder the burden of rendering legal services to the needy in Mississippi." The first funding for civil legal assistance came from fees assessed to out-of-state lawyers who wished to represent clients in Mississippi. A change in the pro hac vice rule allowed better tracking of out-of-state lawyers' participation in Mississippi cases, and the pro hac vice fee funded civil legal assistance.

Edwin Lloyd Pittman was born Jan. 2, 1935, in Hattiesburg. He was educated in Hattiesburg public schools. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in

history and government from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1957. He earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1960. He practiced law in Hattiesburg for 16 years. His law partner was the late Justice Michael Sullivan. They served together on the Supreme Court; Sullivan joined the court before Pittman was elected.

He received the Humanized Education Award 1982-83 from the Mississippi Association of Educators. He received the University of Southern Mississippi's HUB Award recognizing outstanding community and public service in 1989. He was a charter member of the Southern Miss Alumni Association Hall of Fame. The Mississippi State University Pre-Law Society honored him with the Distinguished Jurist Award for 2002. The Hinds County Bar Association and the Jackson Young Lawyers Association honored him with the Judicial Innovation Award in 2003.

Chief Justice Pittman is survived by his wife Virginia; children Melanie Wakeland, Jennifer Martin, Will Browne, Michael Browne, Joly Nield, and Betsy McClendon; and grandchildren Barbara Byrd, Lucy Haag, Trey Wakeland, Edwin "Tad" Pittman III, Christian Reid Pittman, Lauren Kump, Elizabeth Jones, Taylor Browne, Lindsey Browne, Connor McClendon, and Bill McClendon. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Barbara Peel Pittman, and his son, Edwin Lloyd "Win" Pittman, Jr.

Former Court of Appeals Chief Judge John Fraiser Jr. died July 4



Former Judge John Fraiser

Former Mississippi Court of Appeals Chief Judge John James Fraiser, Jr., died on July 4 at his home in Starkville. He was 98.

A funeral service was held on July 9 at First United Methodist Church in Starkville. Burial was at Oddfellows Cemetery.

Judge Fraiser served as the first Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, leading the Court in its formative years from the time it began hearing cases in January 1995. His organizational leadership helped clear a backlog of cases on appeal.

He also made important contributions to public education during his eight years of legislative service. He served as Senate Chairman of Education, Chairman of Universities and Colleges, Vice Chairman of Judiciary, and was a member of the Senate Appropriations Committees. He was the Senate author of the 16th Section Land Act, co-author of the Math and Science Program Act which created the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science for gifted high school students on the campus of Mississippi University for Women,

and was draft assistant for establishing the Education Reform Act. He was a staunch supporter of funding for the Mississippi State University School of Veterinary Medicine and was co-author for the establishment of the School of Architecture at MSU.

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice Leslie D. King met Fraiser while both served in the Legislature; Fraiser was a Senator, having taken office in 1976, and King served in the House of Representatives starting in 1980. Each served on his respective chamber's Universities and Colleges Committee. They later served together among the 10 inaugural members of the Court of Appeals.

Presiding Justice King remembered Fraiser for his courtesy to everyone he met, his professionalism and his sense that the work of the body was more important than the individuals.

"John approached each task and responsibility with a sense of purpose and professionalism.... John was an institutionalist. John knew that the Legislature as a body was more important than the individual men and women who were privileged to serve there. As such, John sought to, and encouraged his legislative colleagues to conduct the work of the Legislature with decency, fairness, honor and integrity. These are the character traits that suited John for service as the first Chief Judge of the Mississippi Court of Appeals."

Presiding Justice King said, "When the 10 mem-

bers of the newly established Mississippi Court of Appeals first assembled, most of us had never met, and knew little, if anything, about each other. As Chief Judge, John had the responsibility of bringing 10 distinctive individuals and personalities together as an institution, to provide equal justice impartially. Because of the previously mentioned strong character traits, John was instrumental in bringing 10 individuals together as an effective and respected institution, the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi."

Court of Appeals Chief Judge Donna Barnes said, "I have great respect for all the original members of the Court and especially Judge Fraiser. They handled a remarkable amount of backlog for the court system and set an example that the Court of Appeals strives to uphold."

Judge Fraiser worked on the backlog of appeals before the Mississippi Legislature created the intermediate appellate court in 1994. He was one of three appellate magistrates selected by the Supreme Court in October 1990 to reduce the time from appeal to decision. Magistrates made reports and recommendations to expedite court rulings on appeals and motions. Chief Justice Armis Hawkins in a 1993 address to a joint session of the Legislature said the magistrates "kept our judicial boat from absolute swamping." Chief Justice Hawkins would later appoint Fraiser as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, a position he held until his retirement on

Jan. 31, 1997.

John James Fraiser, Jr. was born on Aug. 10, 1925, in Sunnyside, Leflore County, to John J. Fraiser, Sr. and Evelyn Wells Fraiser. He attended and graduated as class president of the Minter City School. He pursued undergraduate studies at Delta State University and Mississippi State University.

In July 1943, he volunteered for service in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He served as a top turret armorer gunner on a B-24 bomber of the 15th Air Force, completing missions over Germany, Austria, Romania, Yugoslavia and Northern Italy. He was awarded the Air Medal with clusters for his service in five battle zones. He was honorably discharged in October 1945 at the rank of Staff Sergeant.

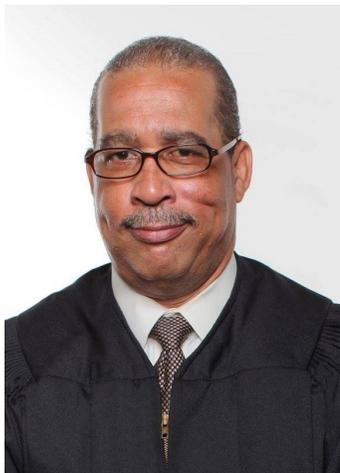
He resumed his education at the University of Mississippi in February 1946 and graduated in 1948 with his Bachelor of Laws and Juris Doctor. In law school, he was a member of Phi Alpha Delta, a national honorary scholastic legal fraternity.

He began practicing law with Means Johnston in Greenwood. He practiced law in Greenwood for 42 years and was senior partner in the firm of Fraiser and Burgoon for 25 years. He also served as Leflore County Prosecuting Attorney for 20 years. He was president of the Leflore County Bar Association.

His civic and community service in Greenwood included chairman of the Leflore District of Boy Scouts of America, Direc-

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Retired Hinds County Court Judge Melvin Priester, Sr. died on Oct. 2



**Retired County Court Judge
Melvin V. Priester Sr.**

Retired Hinds County Court Judge Melvin V. Priester Sr. died peacefully on Wednesday, Oct. 2, at his home in Jackson. He was 74.

A memorial service was held on Oct. 8 at the Old Capitol Inn in Jackson.

Judge Priester concluded a public service career of nearly 40 years with nine and one-half years of service on the Hinds County Court. He was elected to Sub-District 1 in November 2010 and took office on Jan. 4, 2011. He retired on June 3, 2020, due to health issues.

Former Chief Judge Fraiser, *continued from page 27*

tor of Leflore County Salvation Army, Leflore County Chairman of the March of Dimes, Vice President of the Greenwood Junior Chamber of Commerce, President of Greenwood Kiwanis Club, and Chairman of Mississippi School for Cerebral Palsy. He received Greenwood's Distinguished Service Award in 1955. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service by Mississippi State in May 2020.

His family said in his

At the time Judge Priester retired, he said, "The time that I spent on the bench was certainly one of the most interesting and challenging periods of my life. I thank all those folks who put me on the bench. I thank all of those folks with whom I had the opportunity to work." As he looked forward to retirement, he said, "I will just lean on the Lord and He will show me the way."

Retired Hinds County Circuit Judge Tomie Green said that Judge Priester's service reached far beyond his County Court courtroom. "He was my go-to to handle the overload." Judge Priester handled preliminary hearings and arraignments. The Circuit Court designated him as a special circuit judge to try cases in which litigants were willing to move to County Court, and he presided over felony guilty plea hearings. "That freed us in terms of being able to deal with the other matters," she said.

He was already an experienced Circuit Judge. In 2008, the Supreme Court

obituary that "in 2000, he and his beloved wife, Jennie, moved to Starkville full time where they became avid participants in all things Mississippi State University: sports, academics and public programs hosted by the University. Together they attended many memorable moments of MSU life, especially trips to the Collegiate Baseball World Series where they witnessed Mississippi State win the College World Series."

appointed him as a Special Circuit Judge for Hinds County. He was one of several judges appointed by the Supreme Court to address violent and drug related crimes. He served for more than two years.

Later, as a County Court Judge, he also dealt with preliminary matters in Circuit Court in many cases in which minors were charged as adults; the cases involved violent felony crimes. He helped the courts meet the requirement for providing a hearing before a judicial officer within 48 hours, Judge Green said. "I called upon him to make sure that was happening," she said. When COVID struck, he stepped in to help the circuit judges conduct hearings remotely for detainees at the Hinds County Detention Center. He also assisted the municipal courts by conducting some of the initial appearances, she said. He had been a municipal judge for nearly three years in his earlier service.

"He provided certainly a benefit not just to the County Court," Judge Green said. "Most people didn't know how much he was doing outside his elected position. Whatever we needed him to do, he was always there. He was one of the people who was willing to do whatever it took to get things done."

Judge Green said that Judge Priester was reluctant to retire. He felt a commitment to the Court and the litigants.

Judge Priester had won re-election and had much of his term remaining when he stepped down. He said in an interview, "Due

to my physical condition, I can no longer in good faith maintain my position....I think the people of Hinds County and from Sub-District 1 deserve someone who could better serve them." He suffered a stroke in March 2019. He had a heart stint, and he developed diabetes.

Judge Priester's family said in a statement, "That response was typical of Judge Melvin Priester Sr. He was a public servant who tried to guide community residents and counsel courtroom defendants so they would not be defined by past mistakes, and he encouraged young people to dream big and seek higher goals. For many years, he sponsored and/or coached football and soccer teams for young boys, and he successfully mentored older students to compete in debates and mock trial events. He coached mock trial teams at Lanier High School, Murrah High School, and Mississippi College School of Law. He also coached little league baseball and earned a black belt in karate, which he later used in teaching karate to inner city children."

Retired Hinds County Chancery Judge Patricia Wise said, "He was able to influence a lot of young people. He was very dedicated in helping with some of the mock trial competitions." She said, "There weren't many Jackson Public School predominantly black teams participating in the Mississippi mock trial competition" at that time. "He was committed to the next genera-

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Retired Circuit Judge W. Swan Yerger died on Aug. 1



**Retired Circuit Judge
W. Swan Yerger**

Retired Hinds County Circuit Judge W. Swan Yerger died on Aug. 1 in Mobile, Ala. He was 92.

Judge Yerger served for 14 years as Circuit Judge of the 7th Judicial District of Hinds County. Gov. Kirk Fordice appointed Judge Yerger to a vacancy on the court in 1996. He served the two-year unexpired term, and was elected three times. He was senior judge of the district from 2002 until he retired in Decem-

ber 2010. He was a member of the Mississippi Bar for 66 years.

Retired Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. of Jackson said, "Judge Yerger served ably and honorably as a Circuit Judge in Hinds County. Judge Yerger will be remembered for the way he worked his docket to ensure all had access to justice and he did so in a dignified and respectful manner. He was one of the early advocates for electronic filing and supported the implementation of the system used by the courts today. He understood the importance of fairness, efficiency, economy and closure to the legal system."

Senior Hinds County Circuit Judge Winston Kidd served with Judge Yerger for nine years. Judge Kidd said, "I am saddened to learn of the passing of former Circuit Judge Swan Yerger. Judge Yerger had a long and suc-

cessful career as a lawyer and Circuit Judge. I extend my deepest sympathy to Judge Yerger's family and loved ones during this difficult time."

William Swan Yerger was a fifth generation Mississippian. His family in Jackson goes back for generations. He was born on June 11, 1932, in Jackson, the son of the late Rivers Applewhite Yerger and Wirt Adams Yerger. He grew up in Belhaven. He attended Power and Bailey Schools. He became an Eagle Scout at the age of 15 and upon graduation from Central High in 1950, he entered Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va. During his sophomore year, he was elected Class Historian. He was on the Honors list and served as Squad Leader.

He transferred to the University of Mississippi for his junior year and joined the Air Force ROTC. The following year he was elected Cadet

Colonel and Wing Commander for the ROTC. He graduated in 1954 with a major in history and a minor in English. His senior year also was his first year of law school.

He joined the U.S. Air Force as Second Lieutenant and was stationed with the Air Materiel Command at Brookley Field in Mobile, Ala. He was later promoted to First Lieutenant. After completion of his military service, he entered his second year of law school at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Va., and earned his law degree. He was selected as a member of the Student Legal Forum.

He was admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 1958, and practiced law in Jackson for 38 years before his appointment to the bench. He was President of the Mississippi Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and the Mississippi Defense Lawyers Association.

He was a founding member of the North Jackson Rotary Club and became its first president. He was a member of the Rotary Club of North Jackson for more than 50 years. He was president of the Jackson Junior Chamber of Commerce and served as Chairman of the Board of the Metropolitan Jackson YMCA. He was the originator and first chairman of the Mississippi Arts Festival. He was one of the earliest members of the Board of Directors of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters, and later served as its president.

He and his wife Gingia moved to Fairhope, Ala., in 2021.

Judge Priester was mentor to youth, *continued from page 28*

tion of lawyers."

"Mel really added a lot to the legal profession," Judge Wise said. "The first impression that you always got of Melvin Priester Sr. is how intelligent, how intellectual and serious minded he was about his profession."

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education in 1972 and a Master of Education degree in rehabilitation counseling in 1973 from Boston University. He earned his law degree from the University of Texas Law School in Austin in 1986. Before entering law

school, he worked in the mental health field for 10 years. He was a rehabilitation counselor and program director at a residential treatment program for emotionally disturbed adolescents in Dorchester, Mass. He worked as a psychiatric social worker at a Houston, Texas, psychiatric hospital, as an assistant unit director of a Houston out-patient mental health clinic, and as unit director of a residential mental health treatment program in Houston, Texas.

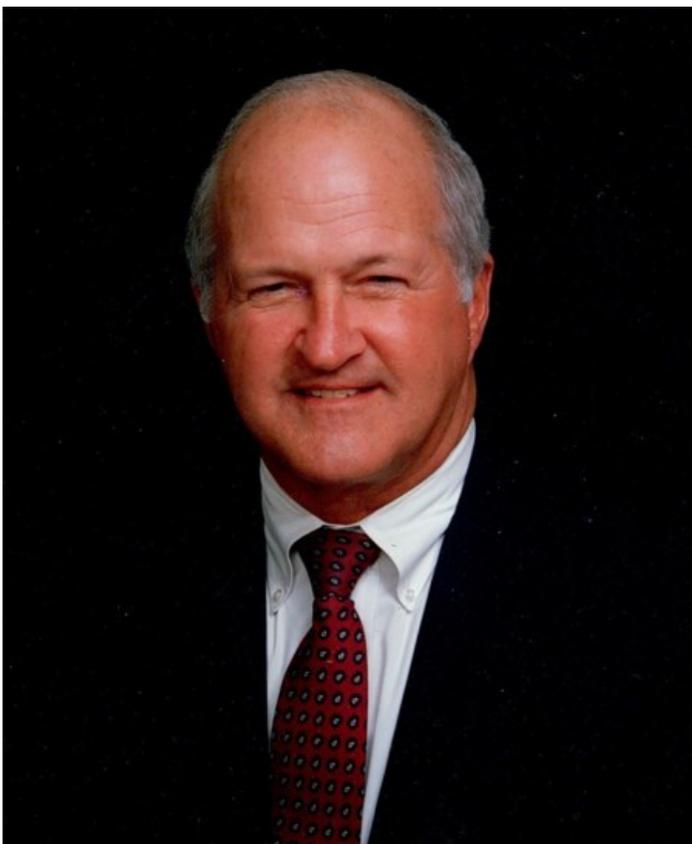
After moving to Mississippi, he served as a special assistant attorney gen-

eral in the office of then-Attorney General Edwin Lloyd Pittman. Priester was assigned to health law matters from 1985 to 1987.

In 1988, he co-founded Priester Law Firm PLLC with attorney Elizabeth Charlene Stimley Priester. The firm continues under the leadership of Ms. Priester and their son, managing partner Melvin Priester Jr.

Son Jonathan Priester is employed at Google headquarters in New York City and serves on the Board of Trustees for Boston University, his father and mother's alma mater.

Retired Hinds County Chancellor Stuart Robinson Sr. died on Sept. 25



Retired Chancellor Stuart Robinson Sr.

Retired Hinds County Chancellor J. Stuart Robinson, Sr., died on Sept. 25 in Madison at the home of his son. He was 87.

Judge Robinson served as chancellor for 24 years. He was elected to the Hinds County Chancery bench in 1982 after practicing law in Jackson for 21 years. He served as chancellor through 2006. After he left the bench, he practiced law with his son, J. Stuart Robinson, Jr., at Robinson, Biggs, Ingram, Solop and Farris, PLLC.

He was a mentor to younger judges and lawyers.

Retired Hinds County Chancellor William H. Singletary said, "I remember Judge Robinson most fondly from my earliest days of practicing law, when he made it clear to me, a young lawyer who

knew virtually nothing about the practice, that he was always available to help (i.e., teach). And he was. That generous patience was always available to me, even after I became his colleague on the bench. I'll always be grateful for that."

Judge Singletary said, "The first day I assumed office as a Chancery Judge in 1995, Judge Robinson told me on the elevator, 'Now, Bill, judges don't call each other judge, so I'm Stuart to you now.' I never got used to calling him Stuart."

Senior Hinds County Chancellor Dewayne Thomas said, "I have had the distinct privilege to have known Judge Robinson since 1980, the year I was admitted to practice law, and my first term as a member of the Mississippi

House of Representatives. Judge Robinson was a great friend of mine and a great help to me as a young politician and as a young lawyer. He was always willing to help me or any young lawyer."

Judge Thomas said, "When Judge Robinson took the Chancery bench, he was one of the best Chancery Judges in the State of Mississippi and was always fair and applied the law as it should have been, and he was very respectful to all parties and lawyers. Knowing Judge Robinson for the past 45 years meant a lot to me, and I know many others have the same thoughts and memories of him."

Retired Hinds County Chancellor Patricia Wise recalled when she and now retired Chancellor Denise Owens were elected in 1989. "Stuart Robinson was our senior judge. Those were very interesting times when the first two Black female chancellors (took office.) You couldn't have found a more gracious, nice person than him to lead the four of us." Judge Chet Dillard was the fourth chancellor. Judge Robinson "couldn't have provided us with a better learning experience as new first-time women judges. He made the experience a lot more pleasant than it could have been," she said.

Eleventh District Chancellor Cynthia Brewer recalled practicing before Judge Robinson. "Judge Robinson had a demeanor which kept me calm." She recalled his instructive style in keeping the proceedings focused. "He would tap the bench some-

times and say, 'That is not helpful to the fact finder.' He was a good chancellor."

Retired Second District Chancellor H. David Clark, who took the bench in 1989, said, "There were times when I would ask him things as a young chancellor and he was more than willing to share his knowledge and his experience and to help guide me....I am indebted to him and will always be grateful for the assistance he provided to me as a young chancellor. It was very useful. It helped me be a better chancellor."

John Stuart Robinson, Sr., was born on March 30, 1937, in Jackson, the son of Hilda Howie Robinson and McWillie Mitchell Robinson. He was a fifth generation Mississippian. He and his brother, McWillie Robinson, grew up in Belhaven. He played football and was elected Most Handsome at Central High School, where he graduated in 1955. He attended Millsaps College, then earned an undergraduate degree and a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi.

He married his high school sweetheart, Lynett Elise Garst. They were married for 64 years. They have two children, John Stuart Robinson, Jr. and Lynett Elise Robinson.

Judge Robinson enjoyed golf. He was a former board member of Shady Oaks Country Club and a member of the Jackson Country Club. After retiring, he and his wife bought a second home in Oxford. They enjoyed attending Ole Miss games with friends. He also enjoyed saltwater fishing.

Mississippi Bar Memorial Service honors 112 lawyers



Rev. Jeff Redding, Senior Associate Pastor at Pinelake, Madison, gives the benediction at the Mississippi Bar Memorial Service on Oct. 8. Seated, foreground, are Mississippi Bar President-Elect Rhea Tannehill, at left, and Bar President Meade Mitchell. Seated on the bench are, left to right, Justice James D. Maxwell II, Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens, Chief Justice Mike Randolph, Presiding Justice Leslie D. King, Justice Robert P. Chamberlin, and Justice David M. Ishee.

The Mississippi Supreme Court, Mississippi Bar leaders, family members and friends on Oct. 8 honored 112 lawyers and judges who died during the past year. The Mississippi Bar Memorial Service is a solemn annual tradition of the bench and bar.

Mississippi Bar President Meade Mitchell of Ridgeland in his eulogy said, "Each of the lawyers we honor today served their clients, the legal system and the pursuit of justice very well. Some of them practiced many years, and for others, their time with us was too short."

Mitchell said that many he knew well; others he knew only by reputation. He recalled John Corlew as "a fantastic lawyer." Among the list are respected judges, and a former Bar President, Grady F. Tollison Jr. of Oxford. "I know that we all benefit from the life they lived and the legacy they leave behind," Mitchell said.

Supreme Court Presiding Justice Jim Kitchens of Crystal Springs in a response on be-

half of the Court said, "All of them understood that lawyers exist to assist and to serve other people, not just their paying clients. And throughout their careers they were mindful, day after day, of their never-ending obligation to the cause of justice." Justice Kitchens said that those who were memorialized were "women and men who helped provide the glue that holds and American system of justice together."

Bar President-elect Rhea Tannehill of Oxford read the Bar's memorial resolution, which said, in part, "Whereas, we recognize and give thanks for the legacy of each in shaping this honored profession both in Mississippi and beyond. While some gave decades of service, the careers of others were cut short, but we acknowledge each had an impact on the pursuit of justice and upholding the rule of law; and accordingly we celebrate the legacy and memory of their dedication and contributions to our profession; and Whereas, we give thanks for

the devoted public service of those we honor today, and we acknowledge that, without their devotion, and often sacrifice, which they exemplified, the liberty and freedoms we enjoy today would be endangered and our individual lives diminished."

Tannehill read each name of the deceased.

Those who died include former Supreme Court Chief Justice Edwin Lloyd Pittman, Ridgeland; former Supreme Court Justice James L. Robertson, Jackson; former Court of Appeals Chief Judge John J. Fraiser Jr., Starkville; Circuit Judge Claiborne "Buddy" McDonald IV, Picayune; retired Circuit Judge Andrew C. Baker, Charleston; Senior U.S. District Judge Neal B. Biggers Jr., Oxford; retired Chancellor J. Shannon Clark, Waynesboro; retired Hinds County Circuit Judge William A. Gowan Jr., Madison; retired Chancellor L. Melvin McClure Jr., Senatobia; retired Chancellor Franklin C. McKenzie Jr., Laurel; retired Workers Com-

pensation Administrative Law Judge Virginia W. Mounger, Jackson; Municipal Judge Philip Hal Neilson, Oxford; retired Hinds County Court Judge Melvin Priester Sr., Jackson; retired Chancellor Kenneth B. Robertson, Pascagoula; retired Hinds County Chancellor Stuart Robinson, Jackson; retired County Court Judge Patricia B. Sims, Oxford; retired Chancellor George D. Warner Jr., Meridian; and retired Hinds County Circuit Judge W. Swan Yerger, Fairhope, Ala.

Attorneys were: Lee B. Agnew Jr., Jackson; Bethel T. Amos, Dade City, Fla.; Melinda Bryant Arrington, Hazlehurst; Dorrance Aultman, Hattiesburg; William H. Austin Jr., Southaven; Russell L. Bailey Jr., Clarksdale; James E. Baine, El Dorado, Ark.; Nathan Bass, Nashville, Tenn.; Charles A. Becker Jr., Water Valley; Charles S. Bidgood III, Meridian; Michael W. Boyd, Greenville; Jim R. Bruce II, Kennett, Mo.;

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Retired Chancellor Kenneth Robertson died on July 27, 2024



**Retired Chancellor
Kenneth Robertson**

Retired Chancellor Kenneth Robertson died at his home in Pascagoula, surrounded by family, on July 27, 2024. He was 85.

A funeral service was held on Aug. 3 at the First United Methodist Church

in Pascagoula. Burial was at Machpelah Cemetery.

Judge Robertson in his early career served as a public defender while also engaging in private law practice. He served in the Mississippi Senate for six years. He was Chancellor of the 16th Chancery Court of Jackson, George and Greene counties for 27 years. He was chairman of the Judicial Advisory Board. He retired from the bench in December 1994.

His family said in his obituary, "He loved his state of Mississippi and spent a lifetime serving and helping others."

Chancellor Mark Maples of Pascagoula grew up knowing Judge Robertson, a close friend of his

father. He recalled serving as a Senate page for Robertson. "I was not in his district but he invited me to be a page for him while I was in 8th grade. That was so intriguing to me to watch that political process."

"Judge Robertson was on the Chancery bench when I began practicing law. He was known for his wit and wisdom. He was known for writing eloquent opinions on cases."

Kenneth Barkley Robertson was born in State-line, Mississippi, on March 13, 1939. He was raised in Pascagoula by his uncle and aunt, Walter and Helen Robertson.

Judge Maples said, "In my opinion, Judge Robertson's early family strug-

gles reinforced his devotion and dedication to his family and molded him for his 27 years of service as Chancery Court Judge."

"Judge Robertson never met a stranger," Judge Maples said. Also, "He along with his court reporter Harolyn Markle were also known for being masters of crossword puzzles."

Attorney Kelly Sessoms of Pascagoula recalled seeing Judge Robertson sitting outside the courtroom working those crossword puzzles. He was kind, fair and helpful. "He always suggested a way the parties could come together to resolve their issues. It was a real pleasure to be in front of him."

Former Justice Randy Pierce, also a former chancellor in the 16th District, said, "Judge Robertson served the bench and bar well. He was respected by his colleagues and the attorneys and litigants who appeared before him. He was humble and enjoyed his time on the bench. He will be missed."

Chancellor Jim Persons of Gulfport was a fraternity brother at Millsaps College, two years behind Robertson. They remained close. "He was a genuinely good person," he said.

Robertson graduated from Pascagoula High School in 1957, Millsaps College in 1961 and the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1963.

He was a 33rd Degree Mason, Honorary York Rite; Shriner; and a member of First United Methodist Church of Pascagoula. In earlier years, he was a member of the Pascagoula Volunteer Fire Department.

Bar Memorial honors 112, *continued from page 31*

Thomas W. Burt, Montrose, Ala.; Matthew D. Busby, Natchez; Kevin J. Carroll, Tallahassee, Fla.; Bernard W. Chill Jr., Jackson; John T. Church, Hanahan, S.C.; Jephtha C. Clemens, Oxford; Doyle L. Coats, Gulfport; Thomas R. Cobb, New Albany; Revia N. Cohen, Madison; Robert D. Coit, Chunky; Suzanne M. Collipp, Pearl; Richard C. Conant, Ocean Springs; John G. Corlew, Jackson; John J. Crow Jr., Water Valley; Oscar E. Davis Jr., Little Rock, Ark.; Jerry L. Delaughter, Biloxi; Donald R. Downs, Corinth; David M. Duckworth, Nashville, Tenn.; Katherine D. Ervin, Oxford; James O. Ford, Tupelo; John W. Gary III, North Palm Beach, Fla.; Wilfred W. Geisenberger, Natchez; James R. Gilfoy IV, Saltillo; Timothy L. Gowan, Macon; R. Stewart Guernsey, Water Valley; Frances S. Gustafson, Atlanta, Ga.; Robert D. Harrison, Ridgeland; Deborah K. Hester, Long Beach; E. Clifton

Hodge Jr., Baton Rouge, La.; Joel W. Howell III, Jackson; Jay H. Hurdle, Starkville; John W. Hutto, Hattiesburg; Robert W. Johnson, Asheville, N.C.; William W. Johnson, Madison; Barry K. Jones, Jackson; William H. Jones, Petal; Earl P. Jordan Jr., Meridian; Harold R. Jumper, Booneville; Ernest Lane III, Oxford; Almond G. Lumpkin Sr., Poplarville; McGehee V. Marsh, Memphis, Tenn.; Sarah A. McDavid, Jackson; Carl A. McGehee, Natchez; Anselm J. McLaurin, Brandon; William E. McLendon, Spring, Texas; Joseph L. McNamara, Jackson; Clyde C. McRaney Jr., Collins; Frank L. McWilliams, Jackson; Alan E. Michel, Spanish Fort, Ala.; George K. Mihalyka, Vicksburg; Jane Stroble Miller, Farragut, Tenn.; Jimmy L. Miller, Marks; Samuel M. Millette Jr., Destin, Fla.; Robert H. Milner Jr., Gulfport; Shella M. Montgomery, Jackson; Jack G. Moss, Raymond; Paul E. Mo-

yers, Jackson; Albert L. Ne-caise, Gulfport; Judith W. Overall, Booneville; Felecia Perkins, Jackson; Morris Clayton Phillips Jr., Carthage; Elizabeth M. Phipps, Jackson; Charles K. Pringle, Biloxi; Tony P. Provenza, Greenville; William M. Rainey, Franklin, Tenn.; J. Scott Rogers, Jackson; Rex F. Sanderson, Houston; Lynn J. Segars, Iuka; Thomas L. Segrest, Birmingham, Ala.; James S. Simmons, Florence; Ferr Smith, Canton; James F. Steel, Hattiesburg; Wayne L. Sterling, Canton; Frederick P. Strickland Jr., Louisville; Senith C. Tipton, Jackson; Grady F. Tollison Jr., Oxford; Betty L. Ward, Ocean Springs; Crystal L. Welch, Jackson; Joseph Q. White Jr., Pascagoula; William R. Wilson Jr., Oxford; Charles E. Wood, Long Beach; and Emmett N. Young, Tallahassee, Fla.

Mitchell said, "They are in your hearts. They are in your souls. They will always be there."