

Waller becomes presiding justice; Dickinson is new associate justice

Jan. 5, 2004

Justice William L. Waller Jr. of Jackson became a presiding justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court on Monday.

Justice Jess H. Dickinson of Gulfport began his term Monday. He will take the oath of office at a public ceremony in Jackson on Friday, Jan. 9, at 10:30 a.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Jackson.

Justice Waller is one of two presiding justices. Justice James W. Smith Jr. has served as presiding justice since November 2001. The court usually works in panels of three justices. The Chief Justice, the justice with the longest time on the court, presides over one panel. The two justices next in seniority are known as presiding justices, and preside over the two other panels.

Justice Waller said, "With this promotion and my service as chairman of the Rules Committee, I look forward to being able to improve the fair and efficient administration of justice."

Justice Waller since November 2001 has served as chairman of the Supreme Court's Rules Committee, which studies and adopts rules for the trial and appellate courts.

Justice Waller said, "I look forward to using this position to better impact the timely conduct of the court's business. Our business is to make decisions in a fair and just manner, and this must be done in a timely fashion so that our judicial system can function efficiently."

Chief Justice Edwin L. Pittman said of Justice Waller: "He has done an excellent job as an associate justice. He is a man of integrity and excellence at law, and it's a pleasure to have him promoted to presiding justice."

Chief Justice Pittman welcomed Justice Dickinson as the newest member of the court.

"We've anticipated him for a long time and I'm just really pleased to have him here. He's been an excellent lawyer. We anticipate that he is going to be an outstanding Supreme Court justice."

Justice Dickinson spent Monday getting organized. "You can do more work more efficiently if you take the time on the front end to organize," Justice Dickinson said.

"I'm off and running and excited about it, and I'm looking forward to the next eight years. I really believe Mississippi is in for a great year. The attitude of the people I have met so far is very positive. I'm looking forward to being a part of that," Justice Dickinson said.

Justice Dickinson, 56, was born in Charleston and graduated from East Tallahatchie High School. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi State University. He graduated *cum laude* from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1982.

Justice Dickinson practiced law for a year in Jackson, then moved to Gulfport, where he practiced for 20

years. He was elected to the Supreme Court in November 2002. He spent much of the past year hearing civil and criminal cases as a special circuit judge in Forrest and Perry counties.

Justice Waller, 51, has served on the Supreme Court since January 1998. He served as Municipal Judge for the City of Jackson from January 1995 until July 1996. He was in private law practice from 1977 to January 1998.

Justice Waller previously served as chairman of the Lawyer Referral Service for the Mississippi Bar, chairman of the Mississippi Public Defender Task Force and as a member of the Judicial Study Commission.

Justice Waller is a Brigadier General in the Mississippi Army National Guard, presently serving as Commander, 66th Troop Command, headquartered in Jackson.

####

Media Contact: Beverly Pettigrew Kraft, Administrative Office of Courts, 601-354-7452