

Michael K. Randolph takes oath as Supreme Court Justice

April 23, 2004

Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. on Friday swore in Michael K. Randolph of Hattiesburg minutes after Gov. Haley Barbour announced his appointment to a vacancy on the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Smith said, "I know his reputation to be sterling. He is a lawyer's lawyer."

"He will be a tremendous asset to this court. I commend the Governor for his choice of Mike Randolph and look forward to working with him. He will be a distinguished judge," Chief Justice Smith said.

Gov. Barbour called Justice Randolph "one of the state's premier litigators." Justice Randolph's former law firm, Bryan Nelson Randolph PA, does primarily corporate defense practice, but he has represented plaintiffs as well.

Gov. Barbour said, "His ethics are above reproach and his word is always his bond."

The Governor said, "Mike Randolph has strong religious values.... Mike Randolph's religious convictions will serve him well as a Mississippi Supreme Court justice."

Justice Randolph brought three books to the swearing in ceremony at the Gartin Justice Building: the Bible, the Mississippi Constitution and the Code of Judicial Conduct. He said those three will guide him in his service.

Justice Randolph quoted from Exodus 18:21 where Moses' father-in-law Jethro said he should "select men who fear God, are trustworthy and who hate dishonest gain."

Justice Randolph, 57, who served in Vietnam at age 19, said he adopted the motto of the U.S. Army 1st Infantry, with which he served: "No mission is too difficult, no sacrifice is too great."

Justice Randolph said he is "giving up the benefits of corporate practice to make a contribution to change things."

Gov. Barbour said, "The Mississippi Supreme Court is critical to ending lawsuit abuse in our state. Mike Randolph will be a positive addition to the court."

Justice Randolph fills the position left vacant by the retirement of Chief Justice Edwin L. Pittman. The term ends in January 2005.

The Governor said he chose Justice Randolph from among three people recommended by his Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee.

Chief Justice Smith commended the Governor on his use of the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee. Former Governors William Winter, Bill Allain and Ray Mabus also used advisory committees in selecting appointees to fill judicial vacancies. Chief Justice Smith was appointed by Gov. Winter as a Rankin County Court Judge in 1982.

Chief Justice Smith said, "I favor the appointive system. Mike Randolph is a classic example of why the appointive system works best, because you get quality judges."

Chief Justice Smith said, "The biggest problem I view right now is money in the judiciary and the presumption among the people that justice is for sale."

Justice Randolph has practiced law since 1975, first in Biloxi with the firm of Ross, King and Randolph, then with the firm of Bryan, Nelson, Allen and Schroder in Pascagoula, Biloxi and Gulfport. He later opened the firm's office in Hattiesburg. He is a graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law.

He and his wife of 38 years, Kathy Webb Randolph, have three sons. He is a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Temple Baptist Church in Hattiesburg.

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