

Chancery Judge J. Max Kilpatrick takes oath of office

July 1, 2005

Chancery Judge J. Max Kilpatrick of Philadelphia told well-wishers after he took the oath of office Friday at the Neshoba County Courthouse in Philadelphia that he will work to make the court accessible to all people.

Gov. Haley Barbour appointed Kilpatrick, 60, of Philadelphia, to the vacancy created by the retirement of Chancery Judge Edward C. Prisock. The 6th Chancery District includes Attala, Carroll, Choctaw, Kemper, Neshoba and Winston counties. The term ends in December 2006.

Judge Kilpatrick said that when he interviewed for the position, one of Gov. Barbour's concerns was giving the people access to the courts.

"I promised him I would do that, without regard to race or social status, because the office actually belongs to the people of six counties," Judge Kilpatrick said. "I intend to fulfill that promise to the Governor by making all people accessible to the court in a fair and impartial manner."

"I'm honored and I'm humbled by the appointment and I feel like I'll do a good job, but I really think this appointment is more about Neshoba County than it is about me," Judge Kilpatrick said. "The people of Neshoba County have been extra good to me for the last 32 years. I look at this as an opportunity to give something back."

He thanked those who were supportive of his appointment. "I won't let you down. I'll work hard and be fair and impartial. I'm going to rule without regard to race, creed, color or social status. They all won't be popular, but that's what I've been chosen to do."

Senior Chancery Judge John C. Love Jr. of Kosciusko administered the oath of office. After he signed the oath, he said, "We'll file that with the clerk and I look for you to start work and take on your share of this load." The two judges will share the caseload for the district.

Judge Love said Judge Kilpatrick is well-prepared for the job. But he said the job will present some unexpected turns.

"I expect that with all of the experience you have had, you would be well prepared to take on the responsibility that this office is going to give you, but I want to assure you that every week you are going to be faced with something you haven't experienced before, that these lawyers are going to raise new legal issues that you are going to have to deal with," Judge Love said. "I can almost assure you that every week, you are going to experience or learn of something that goes on in the society around you that you did not dream existed, and you are going to be faced regularly with decisions that are not going to be so easy to make. The Governor has appointed you to this and these people are going to entrust you with the responsibility of taking on those decisions."

"I'm confident you will do a good job and you will represent these people well and you will be fair and impartial in all of your decisions," Judge Love said.

Judge Kilpatrick, a graduate of the University of Mississippi School of Law, has practiced law for 32 years. His practice has been primarily domestic relations and criminal defense, with some workers compensation defense work.

He served in the Mississippi House of Representatives, representing Leake and Neshoba counties, from 1972 to 1980. In 1980, he served for a year as district attorney for the 8th Circuit District, which includes Leake, Neshoba, Newton and Scott counties. He has served as board attorney for the Neshoba County Board of Supervisors for the past 17 years.

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