

Supreme Court appoints special judge for Hinds County Circuit Court

October 9, 2008

The Mississippi Supreme Court has appointed Jackson attorney Pieter Teeuwissen as a special judge to assist the Seventh Circuit Court of Hinds County with its criminal docket.

Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. will administer the oath of office at 10 a.m. Friday, Oct. 10, at the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

Special Judge Teeuwissen will hear criminal cases assigned by Senior Circuit Judge Swan Yerger. The appointment is expected to last through Dec. 31, 2008. His judicial duties will be part-time.

Chief Justice Smith said, "Mr. Teeuwissen is a very experienced courtroom lawyer with an extensive and varied background. I am confident of his ability to assist the other special judges in expediting the criminal docket for the citizens of Hinds County.

Special Judge Teeuwissen said, "It is an honor that the Chief Justice would ask me to help with the criminal justice issues facing Hinds County. As a resident of the city of Jackson, I look forward to helping the community better address the crime issues facing all of us."

Six special judges have previously been appointed by the Mississippi Supreme Court to assist the Hinds County Circuit Court.

Teeuwissen will replace Special Judge Billy G. Bridges of Brandon. Bridges, a former chancellor and retired Court of Appeals Judge, has served as a special judge for Hinds County for the past year. Judge Bridges also serves as a special judge to hear civil cases related to Hurricane Katrina in Jackson County. The volume of Katrina-related cases requiring special judge appointments has increased. Judge Bridges will turn all of his attention to Katrina cases.

Teeuwissen is one of four special judges appointed to part-time positions. Two special judges were appointed on July 11 to full-time positions to assist the Circuit Court of Hinds County with its criminal case docket.

The other part-time special judges are:

- retired Hinds County Circuit Judge L. Breland Hilburn, first appointed July 26, 2004, with appointments extended;
- retired Hinds County Circuit Judge William F. Coleman, appointed Feb. 1, 2008;
- former Assistant Hinds County Prosecuting Attorney Trent L. Walker, appointed Feb. 4, 2008.

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The full-time special judges are:

- former Jackson Municipal Judge Melvin V. Priester, appointed July 11, 2008;
- former Hinds County Court Judge and Hinds County Undersheriff William A. Gowan Jr., appointed July 11, 2008.

Teeuwissen, 42, has served as a special assistant to the city attorney for the city of Jackson since November 2004. His duties in the city attorney's office involve civil matters. He expects to continue in that role.

He previously worked as a lawyer in private practice with the firms of Danks, Simon, Teeuwissen & Associates; Dockins Simon & Teeuwissen; Byrd & Associates; and Cherry

Givens Lockett Peters & Diaz. His private practice experience includes medical negligence, consumer, products liability, wrongful death, accident and personal injury litigation as well as domestic law. He has extensive private practice experience at the trial and appellate level. He also served as a staff attorney for the Department of Human Services from December 1990 to September 1991.

He is vice-chair of the Mississippi Board of Bar Examiners. He has made numerous continuing education presentations for lawyers, law enforcement officers and other municipal employees. He has served as a guest lecturer at Jackson State University, Howard University School of Law, and Clark-Atlanta University.

Teeuwissen earned his law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1990. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Tougaloo College in 1987, majoring in history and political science with a minor in English. He did post-graduate study in pre-medicine at Tougaloo.

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