

Swartzfager appointed to head Office of Capital Post-Conviction Counsel

June 12, 2008

The Mississippi Supreme Court has appointed Glenn S. Swartzfager of Brandon as director of the Office of Capital Post-Conviction Counsel.

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice James W. Smith Jr. and Swartzfager will be available to answer questions about the appointment at 11 a.m. Friday, June 13, at the new Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson.

Swartzfager's appointment is effective July 1, for a four-year term to run through June 30, 2012. He has served as acting director since Jan. 1.

Swartzfager said, "I am humbled and flattered by the confidence Chief Justice Smith has shown in me. The office carries a very heavy burden in representing individuals sentenced to death, and I hope to provide the very best representation to them. The work the office does is important not only to the individual clients, but to the entire legal system of the state of Mississippi."

The Office of Post-Conviction Counsel was created by the 2000 Legislature to provide representation to indigent death row inmates in post-conviction proceedings. The office currently represents 11 death row inmates.

A post-conviction proceeding, as defined by the Mississippi Uniform Post-Conviction Collateral Relief Act, Mississippi Code Section 99-39-3, is "a procedure, limited in nature, to review those objections, defenses, claims, questions, issues or errors which in practical reality could not be or should not have been raised at trial or on direct appeal." Post-conviction proceedings are for the purpose of bringing to the trial court's attention facts not known at the time of the judgment.

Swartzfager previously served for a year as deputy director of the Mississippi Office of Indigent Appeals. He joined the office in December 2006. That office, created by legislation enacted in 2005, provides representation on appeal for indigent persons convicted of felonies but not under sentences of death.

Swartzfager earned a bachelor of science degree in microbiology from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1989 and a law degree from the Mississippi College School of Law in 1992. He practiced law in Laurel, his hometown, for five years, and served for a year as Youth Court public defender for Jones County. He served as a staff attorney for the Mississippi Supreme Court April 1998 until March 2002. He worked as a special assistant attorney general March 2002 through August 2003.

He returned to private practice, doing trial and appellate work as a senior associate for the Jackson law firm of former Gov. William Waller from September 2003 through December 2006.

He has taught trial and appellate advocacy as an adjunct professor at the Mississippi College School of Law since January 2003.

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