

Investiture of Judge Ermea Russell is June 27 in Jackson

June 22, 2011

State and federal officials along with community leaders will be in attendance at the investiture ceremony for Judge Ermea J. Russell of the Court of Appeals of the State of Mississippi. The investiture ceremony is scheduled for 3 p.m. June 27 at the Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson.

Supreme Court Justice Leslie D. King will administer the oath of office. Gov. Haley Barbour appointed Judge Russell to the vacancy created when he appointed former Court of Appeals Chief Judge King to the Supreme Court.

Judge Russell, of Flora, was sworn in and began her duties May 20. It is traditional to have a formal investiture ceremony at a later time.

Judge Russell is the first African-American woman to sit on a Mississippi appellate court. Judge Russell has worked in the federal government, all three branches of state government, advised officials of fledgling foreign democracies, and served in the United States military. Her legal career includes government service as well as private law practice.

Judge Russell, the youngest of six children, grew up in Butler, Ala. She earned Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from the University of West Alabama, formerly Livingston University. She earned her law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

In October 1985, a few months after she graduated from law school, she became a staff attorney in the office of the Mississippi Secretary of State, where she served as director of the Uniform Commercial Code Division. Judge Russell served as staff attorney for the Mississippi Senate from December 1986 to May 1990, drafting legislation and advising committees.

Judge Russell directed development of affirmative action policies to improve minority participation in higher education at the state's eight public universities following her appointment in May 1990 as assistant commissioner for intercultural relations for the Institutions of Higher Learning. Judge Russell became chief legal counsel to Lt. Gov. Eddie Briggs in January 1992. She was unanimously elected by the 52-member body to serve as Secretary of the Mississippi Senate in January 1993, and served for three years.

Judge Russell was selected by the United States Information Agency to serve as a legislative consultant to fledgling governments formed after the breakup of the former Soviet Union. She served as an advisor to the Parliament of the Republic of Armenia and to the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Judge Russell became the first female to serve as a Circuit Judge in Hinds County when she was appointed by Gov. Kirk Fordice in April 1998.

Following her time as a Circuit Judge, Russell returned to private practice briefly before joining the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as a senior trial attorney. She litigated on behalf of the government in enforcing the laws against employment discrimination. Prior to her appointment, Judge Russell was in the private practice of law with The Russell Law Firm, PLLC in Jackson.

Judge Russell is a decorated veteran with more than 37 years of military service. She served in increasing positions of leadership and retired at the rank of colonel in September 2010. She is a veteran of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Judge Russell has received numerous awards and citations for outstanding performance and service to include the Global War on Terrorism Service and Expeditionary Medals, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Joint Service Commendation Medal, and the Bronze Star.

Judge Russell is a member of the Mississippi Bar, the American Bar Association, Magnolia Bar Association, the Charles Clark American Inns of Court, the Mississippi Women Lawyers Association, and the Southern Association of Mediators. She is a former member of the Board of Bar Commissioners and the Governor's Judicial Reform Commission. Judge Russell is a member of Morning Star Baptist Church and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

The investiture will be webcast on the State of Mississippi Judiciary web site, www.mssc.state.ms.us.

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