

Portraits of former Court of Appeals Chief Judges unveiled

August 3, 2011

The Court of Appeals of Mississippi unveiled portraits of two former chief judges at a ceremony Monday, Aug. 1, at the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

The Court accepted portraits of former Chief Judge Leslie D. King of Greenville and former Chief Judge Billy G. Bridges of Brandon. The judges donated the portraits, which will hang at the Court of Appeals.

Court of Appeals Judge Donna Barnes of Tupelo, who arranged the presentation of the portraits, said, "This court owes a great deal to both of these men. Without their leadership in the early years of the court, it would not be the institution it is today."

Justice King served as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals from April 30, 2004, until March 1, 2011, when he was appointed to the Mississippi Supreme Court. He was a member of the Court of Appeals for a little more than 16 years. He was the longest serving and the last original member of the Court of Appeals.

Judge Bridges retired from the Court of Appeals Dec. 31, 2005, after serving 11 years as an appellate judge. He served as Chief Judge from Jan. 31, 1997, until Feb. 17, 1999. Judge Bridges remains a senior status judge, presiding as a trial court judge by special appointment of the Supreme Court.

Justice King and Judge Bridges both were elected to the Court of Appeals in 1994 and began their service on the court when it began operation in January 1995.

The Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court selects one member of the Court of Appeals to serve as its Chief Judge.

Justice King thanked his former colleagues on the Court of Appeals. "Working with each of them was a learning experience. You grow from their shared wisdom and knowledge. That shared experience is something that goes with you, and it impacts you for the rest of your life," Justice King said.

Judge Bridges said, "I enjoyed being chief judge. It's an honor to be a part of this gathering... and to have a permanent place at the court."

The portrait unveiling was done in conjunction with the swearing in ceremony for new law clerks.

Justice King previously served for 15 years in the Mississippi House of Representatives, where he was vice-chair of the House Ways and Means Committee and vice-chair of the Conservation and Water Resources Committee. He is a former Washington County Youth Court counselor, prosecutor and public defender, and former Metcalfe municipal judge.

Judge Bridges previously served as chancery judge of the 20th Chancery District of Rankin County, as district attorney for the 20th Circuit Court District of Rankin and Madison counties, and as Rankin County prosecuting attorney. He was board attorney for the town of Florence. He represented the Rankin County School Board and the Rankin Medical Center. Judge Bridges was recognized earlier this year by the University of Mississippi School of Law for 50 years in the practice of law. He is a recipient of the law school's Legal Legacy Medal.

The Court of Appeals was created by the Legislature in 1993, and began hearing cases in January 1995. The Court of Appeals relieved a backlog of cases before the Mississippi Supreme Court and speeded up decisions. The 10-member court hears cases assigned by the Supreme Court.

Photos from the portrait unveiling are available to the media upon request.

####