

Justice Carlson announces plans to retire at end of term

November 14, 2011

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Justice George C. Carlson Jr. of Batesville today announced that he plans to retire at the end of his term in January 2013. He will complete the term, but will not seek reelection in November 2012.

Justice Carlson, 65, will have completed 30 years of public service as a judge in January 2013, with 11 years of service on the Supreme Court and 19 years as a circuit judge for the 17th Circuit District. Then-Gov. Ronnie Musgrove appointed him to a vacancy on the Supreme Court effective Nov. 1, 2001.

Justice Carlson said he loves his work and enjoys good health, but looks forward to spending time with his wife, his son and daughter and their spouses, and three grandchildren.

Justice Carlson said, "I feel the Lord has blessed me with good health and the wisdom to realize that it is time to go home to Batesville and enjoy my family in retirement."

"I continue to enjoy every day as a public servant for the citizens of Mississippi. I love coming to work every day," he said.

"My decision to retire in no way involves a waning of energy or enjoyment in the performance of the duties that the citizens of the 33-county northern Supreme Court district have entrusted to me by their votes at the polls in 2004. I am honored for the trust that they placed in me, and I am honored for the trust that former Gov. Ronnie Musgrove placed in me by way of his appointment of me to this office. Likewise, I must acknowledge the citizens of the five-county 17th Circuit Court District in northwest Mississippi. In 1982, they humbled this then-36-year-old lawyer with their votes, electing me as a circuit judge, thus enabling me to embark upon this incredible journey as a state judge."

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, "Presiding Justice Carlson is a tireless public servant whose life is characterized by hard work, attention to detail, fairness and collegiality. No one worked longer hours or paid more attention to the work of the Court than Justice Carlson. Above all, he demonstrates the highest ethical standards possible in his public and personal life. No person has positively shaped the image of the Court in the past 10 years more than Presiding Justice Carlson."

The catalyst for Presiding Justice Carlson's decision to retire came during the 2010 Labor Day weekend, when his daughter and his daughter-in-law announced that they were pregnant. "I knew then...that I was ready to return home at the end of this current term," he said.

He and his wife, Jane Ivy Russel Carlson, have three grandchildren, ages 2 ½, 7 months and 6 months. His daughter and her family live in Batesville. His son and family live in Atlanta.

While he has an apartment at the Ross Barnett Reservoir and lives there during the work week, his home has always been Batesville. He is an elder in the Batesville Presbyterian Church. He also serves as the radio play-by-play announcer for his high school alma mater, the South Panola Tigers.

Justice Carlson said, "While the justices on this Court make sacrifices in their service to this state and her citizens, the real sacrifices are made by our families. Through the years, our northern Supreme Court district justices traditionally have commuted back and forth from our home towns to Jackson to perform our constitutional duties while maintaining our church, civic and family responsibilities back home. Over time, spending the week in Jackson and a brief weekend at home

Justice Carlson/ Page 2

takes its toll. With this in mind, I implore all northern Supreme Court district lawyers and judges who might consider becoming a candidate for this position to prayerfully consider their decision with their families.

“The timing of my announcement is by design,” Justice Carlson said. “I waited until after the 2011 General Election to make this announcement. But I wanted those who might be interested in this position to have the opportunity to discuss this important decision with their families who will gather during the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays.

“I have had the honor and privilege of serving with 16 justices on this Court. Without exception, each justice possessed, and possesses, unique abilities and a genuine desire to fully perform the constitutional duties as a justice on this Court. Thank goodness, we have been diverse in our approaches to the disposition of the cases before us. This diversity and differences of opinion among the justices, in the end, produce solid opinions grounded in the law after all the issues have been fully vetted. Also, we could not get our work done without our loyal and dedicated staff, including our judicial assistants and law clerks, and those in the clerk’s office, court administration, central legal, business office, State Library, ITS, security, Mississippi Electronic Courts, and Administrative Office of Courts, as well as all other departments.

“Other than the ministry, I feel that there is no greater calling than that of being a public servant. When I took the oath of office as a circuit judge in January 1983, my parents presented me with a framed Scripture from Micah 6:8 – ‘And what does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love kindness and walk humbly before your God?’ I hope I have lived up to this charge.”

Justice Carlson is second in seniority among the nine-member Supreme Court. He has served as a Presiding Justice since Jan. 5, 2009. The Supreme Court usually works in panels of three justices. The Chief Justice, the justice with the longest time on the court, presides over one panel. The two justices next in seniority preside over the two other panels.

He is chair of the Supreme Court Rules Committee on Civil Practice and Procedure. He also is chair of the Mississippi Model Jury Instructions Commission, which is conducting a comprehensive examination of jury instructions used in state courts and formulating recommendations to the Supreme Court.

Justice Carlson served as a member on the Governor's Criminal Justice Task Force in 1991, and as a member of the Commission on the Courts in the 21st Century 1992-1993. He served as a member of the Professionalism Committee of the Mississippi Bar 1998-1999, and as a member of the Law School Professionalism Program Task Force 1998-1999. He served as vice-chair of the Mississippi Conference of Circuit Judges 1998-1999, and chair of the Conference 1999-2000.

Justice Carlson is a member and past president of the Panola County Bar Association, and a member and past president of the William C. Keady American Inns of Court. He is a Fellow of the Mississippi Bar Foundation. He is a member of the American Bar Association, the American Judges Association, the Mississippi Bar, and the Lamar Order of the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Justice Carlson is a 1964 graduate of South Panola High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi State University in 1969, and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1972. Justice Carlson graduated from the National Judicial College, University of Nevada, Reno, in October 1982.

#####