

Governor calls Justice Beam a calm, experienced judge

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Gov. Phil Bryant said that a calm demeanor and extensive work with children, families and the Department of Human Services made Justice Dawn Beam his choice as the newest member of the Mississippi Supreme Court.

“I believe that the people of the state of Mississippi need Judge Beam,” the Governor said Tuesday before she took the oath of office as a justice of the Supreme Court.

“Some of the toughest decisions that are made are those dealing with children and families and this lady has navigated difficult waters,” the Governor said.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said that Justice Beam’s background as a former chancellor will be an asset to the Supreme Court. “She comes to us as a seasoned chancellor. She is hard working,” he said.



Chief Justice Waller also praised her leadership in efforts to implement electronic filing in the five counties of the 10th Chancery District. The chancery district that includes Forrest, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River and Perry counties is the first court district in the state to implement district-wide e-filing in one operation.

Justice Beam said, “I truly believe this is what God would have me to do today.”

Moving from a trial court to an appellate court will be a change of pace. “I’ve spent the last 28 years practicing rapid-fire law,” Justice Beam said. In the chancery court, decisions had to be made immediately. On appeal, the Supreme Court has 270 days to issue a decision after the filing of the final brief. With that much time to think about cases, “I’ll never sleep,” she said.

Justice Beam’s husband, Dr. Stephen Beam, held the Bible as she took the oath. Her parents, Dr. Gene Henderson and Dorothy Henderson, son Sam I Newman and step-son Jason

Beam, were with her at the ceremony. Another son, Will Newman, who is in China, watched part of the proceedings via cell phone video. Her father, Dr. Henderson, a minister, opened the ceremony with prayer. "I cannot express the joy Dorothy and I feel today for Dawn," he said.

Gov. Bryant appointed Justice Beam to fill the unexpired term of Justice Randy Pierce, who became director of the Mississippi Judicial College on Feb. 1. The Supreme Court term for District 2, Position 2, is set to expire Dec. 31. An election will be held in November.

Justice Beam, 52, is the fourth woman to serve on the Mississippi Supreme Court. She became the second woman on the current court.

She previously served for five years as a chancellor of the 10th Chancery District. She served for four years as County Prosecutor for Lamar County. She engaged in private law practice for 16 years, having been admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 1989.

Justice Beam earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in business from the University of Mississippi, and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law. She is a member of the South Central Mississippi Bar Association.