

## Judge Linda Coleman sworn in at Capitol before former Legislative colleagues

March 22, 2016

Newly appointed Circuit Court Judge Linda F. Coleman of Mound Bayou took the oath of office at the Capitol before her former colleagues in the Mississippi House of Representatives on Tuesday, March 22.

Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. administered the ceremonial oath. Judge Coleman was sworn in a few days ago in Cleveland so that she could assume her judicial duties. An investiture ceremony will be scheduled in Cleveland at a later date.



*Circuit Judge Linda Coleman, at left, takes the oath of office at the Capitol on March 22. Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr., at right, administers the oath while House Speaker Philip Gunn, center, holds the Bible.*

*you well in your endeavors,” Gunn said.*

Judge Coleman said that the counties of the 11<sup>th</sup> district will provide robes, but this one will be special. “On the days I know will be the toughest days, I’m going to wear it because I’m going to bring all of you along with me,” she said.

Judge Coleman compared the exuberance she felt today with that she felt as a freshman legislator helping escort Rep. Robert G. Clark into the chamber when he became Speaker Pro Tempore in 1992.

“This is one of the happiest days of my life. Today I love all of you and I love this state,” she said.

The House unanimously adopted a resolution commending their former colleague’s service as “a visionary leader, friend, lawmaker and respected attorney,” from House District 29 of Bolivar and Sunflower counties, and congratulating her on her appointment to the 11<sup>th</sup> District Circuit Court of Bolivar, Coahoma, Quitman and Tunica counties.

House Resolution 55, introduced by Speaker Gunn, called her “the distinguished gentlelady from Bolivar County...revered for her legal expertise and credible public service.”

The resolution said that as a legislator, she was “a guardian of this democratic institution during a time in Mississippi’s history when the diversity of the House membership expanded to include meaningful participation by women, African Americans, Republicans and Democrats alike, who equally hold a lion’s share in the stake of advancing the direction of the state’s economic, educational and political climate.”

“Widely considered to be one of the most influential state leaders and skillful tacticians of Mississipp-

Gov. Phil Bryant appointed Judge Coleman on March 9 to a vacancy on the 11<sup>th</sup> District Circuit Court after Judge Johnnie E. Walls Jr. retired. The Governor told the assembled lawmakers and guests that Judge Coleman will serve with grace, dignity and honor.

Judge Coleman thanked the Governor for the appointment.

House Speaker Philip Gunn handed Judge Coleman a check to purchase a judicial robe. House members personally paid for the robe as a parting gift. “We are proud of you and wish

pi's evolving political atmosphere, Representative Coleman maintained a strong leadership role in every meaningful initiative addressed by the Mississippi Legislature during her tenure, including economic development, fiscal affairs, education, gaming, public health, transportation, agriculture, and election reform initiatives and programs,” the resolution said.

The resolution noted her service as vice-chair of the former House Penitentiary Committee, vice-chair of the Tourism Committee, chair of the House Committee on Fees and Salaries of Public Officers, and most recently, vice-chair of the House Corrections Committee. Other committees on which she served included Appropriations; County Affairs; Education; Investigate State Offices; Judiciary A; Judiciary En Banc; Management; Municipalities; Ports, Harbors and Airports; Public Property; Select Committee on Poverty; Transportation; and Ways and Means.

The entire resolution is at this link: <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2016/html/HR/HR0055IN.htm>.

Reflecting on 25 years of service in the House of Representatives, Judge Coleman said, “I am really grateful to God that He allowed me to serve in this esteemed chamber....To have the privilege to shape policy for this state is a deep honor.”

She asked her former legislative colleagues to think of her when they discuss education and other policies which affect the state’s most vulnerable. She came from the poorest school district in the state. “I am from the most vulnerable part of this state, the Mississippi Delta. Even though something is vulnerable, it is still viable,” she said.

Judge Coleman earned a bachelor’s degree in public administration from the University of Mississippi and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law. She was admitted to the Mississippi Bar in 1987, and went to work serving poor clients of North Mississippi Rural Legal Services that same year. She was managing attorney for NMRLS from 1989 to 1994. In private law practice, she represented the towns of Mound Bayou, Clarksdale and Friars Point, and served as attorney for the Bolivar County Board of Supervisors and the Mound Bayou School Board. She is a member of The Mississippi Bar, the Magnolia Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the Council of State Governments and the Mississippi Association of Board Attorneys.

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