



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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UPDATE

Two circuit judges retire, one is sworn in as a senator

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Two long-time circuit judges retired this month and one swore in the other as a West Virginia Senator today in the Senate Chamber.

Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit (Hampshire, Hardy, and Pendleton Counties) Judge Donald H. Cookman was sworn in as a Senator Thursday afternoon. The oath of office was delivered by his brother-in-law, Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit (Lewis and Upshur Counties) Judge Thomas H. Keadle, who also retired today. Judge Keadle is married to Judge Cookman's sister, Beverly.

Thirteenth Judicial Circuit (Kanawha County) Judge Tod Kaufman welcomed the almost one hundred guests, including Chief Justice Brent Benjamin, Justice Robin Jean Davis, several circuit judges, and many members of the legislative and executive branches.

West Virginia Senate President Jeff Kessler welcomed Judge Cookman and joked he would do everything he could to “make the transition easy from one co-equal branch of government to the more co-equal branch of government.”

After being sworn-in, Judge Cookman said he was honored and humbled to be appointed Senator and looks forward to moving from interpreting laws to making laws.

“Hopefully I will do a great job and do the people of West Virginia justice,” said Judge Cookman.

A reception in the Capitol Rotunda followed the ceremony.

Judge Cookman retired January 23, the same day Governor Earl Ray Tomblin appointed him to a seat in the Fifteenth Senatorial District (Hampshire, Morgan, and portions of surrounding counties). Judge Cookman fills the seat vacated by Senator Walt Helmick, who was elected West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner in the November 6 general election.

Judge Cookman has been a Circuit Judge since 1993 and an attorney since 1971. He was the Hampshire County Prosecuting Attorney from 1973 thru 1992, and he served as a Special Prosecuting Attorney in Hardy, Pendleton, and Mineral Counties. During his years as a circuit judge he served as a special judge in other counties on numerous

occasions and several times was called to sit on the Supreme Court when a Justice was recused. Judge Cookman has served as President of the West Virginia Judicial Association and as a member and Chairperson of the Judicial Ethics Commission. He recently was appointed by the Supreme Court to be one of four judges on the new statewide Business Court.

Judge Cookman is a graduate of Romney High School, West Virginia University, and West Virginia University College of Law. He and his wife, Paula Jean, live in Romney. They have three children and three grandchildren.

Judge Keadle has been a judge since 1985 and an attorney since 1974. He practiced law in Romney from 1974 until 1981 and also was an assistant prosecutor in Hampshire County during that time. Judge Keadle then moved to Buckhannon and practiced law there before his election to the bench in 1984.

Judge Keadle is a graduate of Alderson High School, West Virginia University, and West Virginia University College of Law. Between high school and college, he served four years in the Marine Corps; he was a sergeant by the time of his discharge. He then was a state trooper in Romney and Buckhannon for nearly eight years before enrolling in college.

Judge Keadle and his wife recently moved from Buckhannon to her hometown of Romney. They have two children and three grandchildren.

Chief Justice Brent Benjamin has appointed Judge Keadle to begin serving as a senior status judge in the Twenty-Second Judicial Circuit beginning tomorrow, February 1, until the governor names a replacement for Judge Cookman.

Senior Status Judge John Henning (retired from the Twentieth Judicial Circuit of Randolph County) will serve in the Twenty-Sixth Judicial Circuit until the governor names a replacement for Judge Keadle.

The governor's appointees will serve until the next general election.

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