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SUPREME COURT APPOINTS FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT CHIEF JUDGE GENE SCHWARM TO FIFTH DISTRICT APPELLATE COURT

The Illinois Supreme Court announced Thursday the appointment of Chief Circuit Judge S. Gene Schwarm to the Appellate Court in the Fifth Judicial District. Chief Judge Schwarm will fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Appellate Justice James M. Wexstten, effective January 29, 2014.

The appointment is effective April 1, 2014 and will expire December 5, 2016, when the position will be filled by the winner of the 2016 General Election.

“I am honored to be selected to fill the vacancy in the Fifth District Appellate Court," Chief Judge Schwarm said. "My humble thanks go to Justice Lloyd Karmeier and the Supreme Court for giving me this opportunity.

"I am especially pleased to follow retiring Justice Jim Wexstten, an outstanding jurist and colleague."

Chief Judge Schwarm, 58, has served for the past 20 years as a Resident Circuit Judge for Fayette County in the Fourth Judicial Circuit. Since 2001, he has served as Chief Judge of the Fourth Circuit, having been elected seven times by the Circuit Judges of the Fourth Circuit.

Since 2006, Chief Judge Schwarm has served as chairman of the Conference of Chief Circuit Judges. The Conference of Chief Circuit Judges is composed of the chief circuit judges from the 24 Illinois judicial circuits. Chief Judge Schwarm has been elected chairman five times by the 24 chief judges in the state of Illinois. The Conference meets regularly to discuss issues related to the administration of justice in the circuit courts and other matters referred to the Conference by the Supreme Court.

Chief Judge Schwarm has served on numerous committees and commissions for the Supreme Court, including serving as chairman of the Supreme Court Legislative Committee since 2012; chair of the Supreme Court Judicial Mentor Committee since 2006; and as co-chair of the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Council since 2005. He has also served since 2012 as a member of the Supreme Court Committee on Strategic Planning and as member of the Illinois Judicial Conference. Since 2002, Chief Judge Schwarm has served as faculty for numerous judicial education conferences, seminars and symposiums. He is certified as a judicial mentor for new judges and for peer judges.
Supreme Court Appoints Judge Schwarm to Appellate Court
Add One

Prior to his service on the bench, Chief Judge Schwarm worked as named partner of the firm of LeFevre, Zeman, Oldfield and Schwarm Law Group of Vandalia from 1983-1994. While there, he was engaged in the general practice of law, including civil litigation, bankruptcy, real estate and estate planning. While in private practice, he also served as Illinois Special Assistant Attorney General, representing the state in eminent domain cases.

A valedictorian of the Brownstown High School Class of 1973, Chief Judge Schwarm received his Bachelor of Science degree with High Honors from the University of Illinois in 1978. While an undergraduate, he was elected to several scholastic and activities' honor societies including Mortar Board. Chief Judge Schwarm received his juris doctor degree in 1981 from Washington University School of Law. While there, he served as a senior editor of the Washington University Law Quarterly.

Admitted to the Illinois bar in 1981, Chief Judge Schwarm is also admitted to practice in the U.S. District Court – Southern District of Illinois; U.S. District Court – Central District of Illinois; and the U.S. Court of Appeals – Seventh Circuit.

A member of the Illinois Judges Association, Chief Judge Schwarm was awarded its Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010. Also in 2010, he was awarded the Benjamin K. Miller Recognition Award for the prevention of family violence by the Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Council.

Chief Judge Schwarm was chosen in an application process that included review by an eight-member screening committee appointed by Supreme Court Justice Lloyd A. Karmeier. Each applicant was interviewed and their credentials reviewed by members of the screening committee, which forwarded a short list of recommended candidates who were interviewed by Justice Karmeier. Justice Karmeier recommended Judge Schwarm to the Court.

Don Bigham, partner in the law firm of Seibert, Bigham and Tanner in Pickneyville, served as chairman of the screening committee. The other committee members were: Beth Bauer, partner in the law firm of Hepler & Broom in Edwardsville; Craig Hedin, partner in the law firm of Black, Hedin, Ballard & McDonald in Mt. Vernon; John Hudspeth, Clinton County state's attorney; Dawn Sallerson, partner in the law firm of Hinshaw & Culbertson in Belleville; John Sanders, partner in the law firm of Sanders & Sanders in Marion; M. Don Sheafor, partner in the law firm of Burnside, Johnson & Sheafor in Vandalia; and Bill Sherwood, general counsel for Southern Illinois Healthcare in Carbondale.


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