ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT APPOINTS MCGEHEE AS CIRCUIT JUDGE IN FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

Justice Thomas L. Kilbride and the Illinois Supreme Court have announced the appointment of John L. McGehee as a Resident Circuit Judge in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

Mr. McGehee was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of the Hon. Lori R. Lefstein on January 30, 2019. The appointment is effective May 1, 2019, and will conclude December 6, 2020, when the position will be filled by the November 2020 General Election.

Justice Kilbride recommended Mr. McGehee’s appointment to the Supreme Court after an extensive application, evaluation, and interview process that included the formation of a special judicial screening committee.

“I would like to thank Justice Kilbride and the entire Illinois Supreme Court for this incredible honor,” McGehee said. “I look forward to continuing to serve the public as the next resident judge for Rock Island County.”

Mr. McGehee is currently the State’s Attorney for Rock Island County, serving in that role since 2012 and winning reelection in 2016. In 2015, McGehee was elected by his fellow State's Attorneys to the Board of Governors of the Illinois Office of the State's Attorney Appellate Prosecutor for the Third District. Prior to his current position, he was in private practice at McGehee, Olson, Pepping, & Balk Ltd. for 23 years as a partner and owner.

Mr. McGehee earned his Bachelor of Arts from Augustana College in Rock Island and received his Juris Doctor from the Drake University Law School.

McGehee has additionally served as President of the Rock Island County Bar Association, President of the Silvis/East Moline Rotary, and has been a legal lecturer for law enforcement on search and seizure issues.

Under the Illinois Constitution, the Supreme Court has the authority to fill judicial vacancies. To fill this vacancy, Justice Kilbride opened an application process for everyone interested in the appointment. He also sought and received public comment about six applicants, including Mr. McGehee.
The evaluation process included background checks by law enforcement authorities and with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, as well as a poll of attorneys in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit conducted by the Illinois State Bar Association. The attorneys were surveyed on their opinions of the applicants' integrity, temperament, legal ability, management skills, and other qualifications.

Justice Kilbride also appointed an 11-person judicial screening committee made up of representatives from the community, including community members to evaluate the applicants. The committee was chaired by Timothy Bertschy, retired managing partner at Heyl, Royster, Voelker & Allen in Peoria.

“John stood out from the other candidates because he checked all the boxes. He grew up in the area and has over 30 years’ experience in both civil and criminal law,” Bertschy said. “The committee was also impressed because he is active in the community and has the respect of his peers, having been elected to the Board of Governors for the Illinois Appellate Prosecutors Office and awarded Pro Bono Attorney of the Year by Prairie State Legal Services.”

In addition to Mr. Bertschy, the members of the committee were: John Ames, attorney at Ames Law Offices in Orion; Joan Clark, retired program director, Rock Island-Moline Townships; Judge Sara Darrow of the U.S. Central District of Illinois; Jeanette Hunter, retired chief deputy circuit clerk for the Rock Island County Circuit Clerk's Office; Lawrence Lorensen, retired Professor Emeritus of Government Black Hawk College; Diane Reinsch, Of Counsel at Lane & Waterman LLP of the Quad Cities; Maureen Riggs, attorney for the City of Moline; Scott Verschoore, retired business manager for IBEW Local Union #145; Bill Sowards, retired Lieutenant of the Rock Island Police Department; and Lester Weinstine, attorney at Law Offices of Lester S. Weinstine, P.C. in Morrison.

The Fourteenth Judicial Circuit includes Henry, Mercer, Rock Island and Whiteside counties.

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