

Governor names 2 to state's Court of Special Appeals

Byrnes, Kenney to serve
10-year terms on bench

By THOMAS W. WALDRON
SUN STAFF

Deborah Sweet Byrnes, a civil trial lawyer from Towson, was named yesterday to a seat on the Court of Special Appeals, the state's second-highest court.

Gov. Parris N. Glendening also appointed James A. Kenney III, a St. Mary's County attorney, to a seat on the 13-judge court.

Byrnes, 44, has been a litigator with the firm of Whiteford, Taylor & Preston since 1980. She has mainly worked on the defense side of civil cases, often on behalf of doctors and hospitals. She became a partner in the firm in 1989.

"Deborah Byrnes will make an excellent Court of Special Appeals judge because of her keen legal mind and superior intellect, combined with her unwavering dedication to fairness and impartiality," Glendening said in a statement.

A graduate of the University of Maryland Law School, Byrnes represented the city of Baltimore in a class-action suit filed in 1995 by the American Civil Liberties Union that charged that the city's public housing was unlawfully segregated.

She helped craft a partial settlement of that case that calls for

high-rise public housing to be demolished and for some public housing residents to relocate to areas outside Baltimore.

Byrnes said she was eager to help shape the law as an appellate judge.

"The work I do is very, very interesting," she said. "On the other hand, as an appellate judge, you do a lot of thinking, researching, reading in the formative stages of the law."

Byrnes is married to Baltimore County Circuit Judge J. Norris Byrnes. Her husband's brother is a Baltimore circuit judge and his father also was a judge.

She fills the vacancy created by the March retirement of Judge Robert F. Fischer.

Kenney is the first resident of Southern Maryland to be named to the Court of Special Appeals in its 31-year history.

Kenney, 60, has been a partner with Kenney, Lacer, Sparling, Densford and Reynolds, now a six-lawyer general practice firm that he helped start in 1966. He was a prosecutor in St. Mary's County from 1964 to 1967.

He said he was still "taken aback" by the appointment hours after hearing the news yesterday. "It's something that I've always wanted to do," he said. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity."

Kenney is a 1963 graduate of George Washington University Law School and has taught at St. Mary's College since 1964. He is president of the St. Mary's College Foundation.

"James Kenney is a highly qualified attorney who, in addition to his outstanding legal career, has been dedicated to a variety of community endeavors," Glendening said.

Kenney fills the vacancy created by the elevation of Judge Alan M. Wilner to the Court of Appeals.

Kenney and Byrnes are expected to be sworn in to 10-year terms within the next month.