

Wilner named chief judge on appeals bench

He will succeed Gilbert Nov. 1

By Diane Winston

Gov. William Donald Schaefer yesterday named Judge Alan M. Wilner of the Court of Special Appeals, former chief legal aide to Gov. Marvin Mandel, as the next chief judge of Maryland's second highest court.

He will succeed Judge Richard P. Gilbert, who plans to retire from the Special Appeals bench Nov. 1.

"I have every confidence you will do much to carry on the tradition of the good service and that the interest of the people and of our judiciary will be more than well served by this designation," Governor Schaefer wrote to Judge Wilner.

The governor also expressed "sadness" over Judge Gilbert's retirement and praised his "leadership, wisdom and unswerving dedication."

Judge Wilner, 53, has been a justice-at-large on Maryland's Court of Special Appeals since 1977.

The court was created in 1967 to ease the workload of the Court of Appeals. Judge Wilner was placed on the court by former Governor Mandel.

During his tenure as Mr. Mandel's legal aide, he oversaw the governor's legislative package, helped to draft bills and lobbied the bills through the General Assembly.

He was also Governor Mandel's chief legal adviser and represented him on controversial issues.

Before his close association with Governor Mandel, Judge Wilner spent six years in private practice and worked as an assistant state attorney general.

In recent years, he was chairman of the Governor's Task Force on the Mentally Ill, made up of judges, bureaucrats and politicians, that investigated mental illness among the state's prison and jail inmates.

Judge Wilner was educated in Baltimore public schools and received both undergraduate and graduate degrees from John Hopkins University. He received a law degree from the University of Maryland law school.