

Murphy appointed to Circuit Court

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Governor Hughes late Friday appointed Joseph F. Murphy, Jr., a well respected Towson attorney and former Baltimore City prosecutor, to the bench of the Baltimore County Circuit Court.



Joseph F. Murphy, Jr.

Murphy will take the place of James H. Langrall, who retired on disability from the bench several months ago.

The appointment of Murphy, 40, well known for his criminal defense work, is seen as a great addition to the County's bench, which has been shorthanded in recent months because of Langrall's absence. "He is a brilliant and dedicated young man," says Baltimore County Circuit Court Administrative Judge Frank E. Cicone, "and will be a great asset to this bench."

According to Cicone, Murphy is the most sought after defense attorney in the State. "I'm delighted he has been chosen," Cicone says, "The bench and the bar alike will applaud the Governor's decision."

Murphy brings to the bench a wealth of legal experience. Besides being a former prosecutor and defense attorney, he also has taught Evidence at the University of Baltimore Law School since 1974 (where he won the Outstanding Instructor Award in 1979), and

Trial Practice at UMLS since 1979.

In addition, Murphy is the current President of the recently-formed Maryland Criminal Defense Attorneys' Association, and was also recently named to the Federal District Court's Experience Committee by Judge James Miller.

A native of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, Murphy graduated from Boston College in 1965 and then moved south to Maryland, graduating from UMLS in 1969. After being admitted to the bar that same year, Murphy worked for Legal Aid West in Baltimore City as a Staff Attorney until 1970, when he was appointed as Assistant State's Attorney for Baltimore City. In 1975, he was promoted to Deputy State's Attorney, in which he served one year under William Swisher, then in the first of his two terms.

Murphy has been defense counsel in many well publicized criminal cases, including most recently the successful defense of Baltimore

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County District Court Judge David Bates, accused but acquitted of perjury. Murphy tells THE DAILY RECORD he was scheduled to defend Larry Schwartz, the Anne Arundel County youth accused of killing his parents, but will now have to forego that job to assume his judgeship, which he says will likely be within the next 30 days.

Reached in his Towson Office, Murphy reacted to the appointment with surprise. "I was hopeful, but not confident, of getting the appointment, because the other two candidates are top class lawyers, and Governor Hughes had just interviewed me yesterday."

Because of his criminal defense work, will Murphy be more apt to see the defendant's side as a trial judge? Not at all, he says. "You must remember that I was a prosecutor for as long as I was a defense attorney."

This is not the first time Murphy had been up for a judicial appointment. In 1981, he was at 37 the youngest nominee ever to the Court of Special Appeals. He was later up two more times for nomination to that court. This is his third time up for the Circuit Court position.

Murphy resides, with his wife Jo-Ann, and 13 year old daughter, Erin, in Towson.

General description

Murphy is generally described as very bright, an excellent lawyer, excellent in both trial and appellate matters. He is also said to command a thorough understanding of the law, while being attentive to the minutest details of practice. Considered more a "Baltimore metropolitan area lawyer" than a Baltimore County lawyer, Murphy has maintained his law office in Towson, while handling work in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County, as well as in Baltimore County.

Reaction

J. Frederick Motz, U.S. Attorney, Friday called "splendid" the news of the appointment, and predicted

that Murphy would become "a first rate judge."

As U.S. Attorney, says Motz, he has observed Murphy often as opposing counsel. "He always fought hard, fought fair, and with great skill."

Motz says he has hard evidence on which to base his prediction. Motz referred to Murphy's teaching of MICPEL trial advocacy courses, where he, Murphy, supervised mock trials and served as mock trial judge. Motz says Murphy demonstrated then the "intelligence and judicial demeanor" that are the makings of an excellent judge.

The reaction to Murphy's appointment among his fellow lawyers is one of universal agreement and commendation.

Arnold Weiner of Melnicove, Kaufman, Weiner, and Smouse, says Murphy's appointment was "as good an appointment that they could have made." Weiner, who has known Murphy for fifteen years, says Murphy is "an excellent attorney and scholar of the law. . . . He's kind, compassionate and sensitive. He has a great insight into