

The Sun

**New team for Maryland's courts**

**Chief Judge Bell: New appointments may represent governor's strongest legacy.**

by The Baltimore Sun

October 24, 1996 Page(s): 16A

Edition: FINAL

Section: EDITORIAL

Length: 448 words

Biographee: EDITORIAL

Record Number: BSUN478114

---

GOV. PARRIS N. GLENDENING faced a formidable task in naming a replacement for Chief Judge Robert C. Murphy of the Court of Appeals, who retired earlier this month. For a quarter-century, Chief Judge Murphy provided strong, able and honorable leadership for Maryland's judicial system. The challenge facing his successor, Robert M. Bell, is not simply to maintain this high level of justice, but to enhance the quality of Maryland's courts and their service to the public.

Chief Judge Bell brings one qualification not shared by any other candidate for the job, having served on all four levels of Maryland's courts, beginning with his appointment to the District Court in Baltimore City in 1975. He moved up to the Baltimore City Circuit Court in 1980, to the Court of Special Appeals in 1984, and to the Court of Appeals in 1991.

At each level, Judge Bell distinguished himself as a jurist with integrity, judicial temperament and a good legal mind. Combine his depth of experience with a leadership style that stresses collegiality and he is a strong choice to lead Maryland's court system into the 21st century. He is also the first African American to head the state judiciary.

In addition to Chief Judge Bell, the governor made two other appointments yesterday, elevating Chief Judge Alan M. Wilner of the Court of Special Appeals to the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, and appointing Judge Joseph F. Murphy Jr., as Judge Wilner's replacement as head of the Special Appeals panel.

Judge Wilner brings to the state's highest court a legal mind that matches his recognized skills as the administrator of a busy and complex intermediate appellate court. Chief Judge Joseph Murphy is an authority on legal rules of evidence. Since 1991, he has also chaired a committee to revise Maryland's criminal code.

It is an unusual set of circumstances that brings new leadership to three of the state's four courts within a month. Together with Chief Judge Martha F. RASIN, named last month to head Maryland's District Courts, Judges Bell and Joseph Murphy form the new leadership team for the state's judiciary. They each have big shoes to fill, but they appear equal to the challenges.

Under Maryland law, the governor's judicial appointments do not need legislative approval. They therefore constitute what may be his most lasting legacy in the affairs of this state.

Pub Date: 10/23/96

Copyright 1996 The Baltimore Sun Company