

Blake, Davis head list for federal bench

By Marcia Myers
Sun Staff Writer

Two Baltimore judges have emerged as the top candidates for a pair of vacancies on the U.S. District Court for Maryland.

President Clinton has sent the names of U.S. Magistrate Judge Catherine C. Blake and Baltimore Circuit Judge Andre M. Davis to the FBI for background checks, according to sources on Capitol Hill. The next step would be formal nominations by the White House, although that is not expected before early summer, sources said.

The two were recommended from a field of more than 40 candidates who applied to U.S. Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes. If confirmed, it would mean a second woman and a second black on the 10-judge bench.

"I'm not surprised — they are both eminently qualified for the positions," said Baltimore lawyer Herbert Better, who has known both judicial candidates since their early careers

FBI to check backgrounds

with the U.S. attorney's office.

Mr. Better teamed with Judge Blake in the late 1970s on her first trial as a prosecutor — a complicated case involving a juvenile who had stolen a large amount of dynamite to try to blow up a high school. The youth's lawyer argued an insanity defense. The prosecution won the case.

"It was a very difficult case, and difficult cases teach you more about the qualities of people," Mr. Better said. "She really impressed me with not only how smart she was, but she had very, very good judgment."

As the second-in-charge in the U.S. attorney's office, Mr. Better also supervised Judge Davis during his years there, and has observed his work since.

"What has impressed me the most about Andre is he is always in

control," Mr. Better said. "He does not get excited. Through a combination of temperament and good judgment, he does a very good job of handling difficult situations, and sometimes potentially explosive situations."

Judge Blake, 44, recently began a second eight-year term as a federal magistrate judge. Born in Massachusetts, she graduated from Harvard law school in 1975, then went to work for the Palmer & Dodge law firm in Boston. She became a federal prosecutor in Baltimore two years later, and ran the U.S. attorney's office on an interim basis in 1985 and 1986.

½ Judge Davis, 46, is a Baltimore native. He received an undergraduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania, and graduated from the University of Maryland School of Law cum laude. He clerked for Judge Frank A. Kaufman in the U.S. District Court and for Judge Francis D. Murnaghan Jr. in the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

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law degree *cum laude* from the University of Maryland School of Law in 1978. He then clerked for Judge Frank A. Kaufman in the U.S. District Court and for Judge Francis D. Murnaghan Jr. in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

He also has served as an assistant U.S. attorney, president of the Legal Aid Bureau and as a professor at the University of Maryland Law School. In 1987, he was appointed by the governor to be a judge of the District Court for Baltimore City and was elevated to his current position on the circuit court in 1990. He also

directs Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Central Maryland Inc.

"I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity," Davis said about his nomination to the federal bench.

Blake, 44, was born in Massachusetts. She graduated with honors from Radcliffe College and Harvard Law School, where she received her degree in 1975. She then worked with the Boston law firm of Palmer and Dodge for two years.

In 1977, she began working for the U.S. attorney's office in Baltimore, where she served as first assistant U.S. attorney. In 1985, she became the first female U.S. attorney in Maryland when she replaced Motz on an interim basis after his nomination to the federal bench. In 1986, she was named U.S. magistrate judge.
