

Montgomery County Bench Filled; Governor Names Three

Two Women, One Man Handed Judgeships as Glendening Continues Push to Make Judiciary More Balanced; Circuit, District Seats Awarded

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Gov. Parris N. Glendening last week filled three Montgomery County judgeships, extending his push to increase diversity on the state's benches.

Glendening appointed Martha G. Kavanaugh and James Chris Chapin to the Montgomery County Circuit Court. He also appointed Joanne Tokarz Wills to the Juvenile Division of the District Court for Montgomery County.

Praising the appointees as "outstanding," the governor said "they are highly qualified and bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the bench for the citizens of Montgomery County."

Kavanaugh, an American University law graduate, will fill a vacancy created by the General Assembly in 1994. She has served as a judge in the Montgomery County District Court since 1993.

Previously, Kavanaugh was in private practice for 10 years, and served as an assistant state's attorney for Montgomery County between 1978 and 1984.

Chapin — who fills the Circuit Court seat left vacant by the retirement of Judge L. Leonard Ruben last March — is currently a partner in the Montgomery County office of Miles & Stockbridge. He attended Georgetown University Law School.

Chapin served as a president of the Maryland State Bar Association in the 1980s. He has been in private practice for more than 30 years, although he retreated from private practice from 1975 until 1979 as county attorney for Prince George's County.

Wills' appointment fills a district court judgeship vacancy in the juvenile division that was created by the General Assembly in 1994.

Since 1979, Wills has maintained a solo practice, specializing

in juvenile matters with an emphasis on cases involving Children in Need of Assistance and Supervision (CINA and CINS), delinquency, guardianships and adoptions.

The Trial Courts Judicial Nominating Commission for Montgomery County met Oct. 25 to nominate candidates for the governor's consideration.

As of this October, only 36 of Maryland's 240 state judges were women, while 29 were African-American. There were also no judges of Latino or Asian descent.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY JUDICIAL NOMINATING COMMISSION

- Judith R. Catterton, Esq., Chair, Rockville
- Ruth J. B. Bushnell, Silver Spring
- Charles E. Castle Jr., College Park
- Lynda E. Earle, Esq., Rockville
- Thomas L. Heeney, Esq., Rockville
- Barry H. Helfand, Esq., Rockville
- Aris Mardirossian, Germantown
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- Deane A. Shure, Esq., Rockville
- Kim M. Sohn, Potomac
- Rebecca Newman Strandberg, Esq., Bethesda
- DeVance Walker Jr., Silver Spring
- Charles E. Wilson Jr., Esq., Rockville

The drive to make the bench more balanced began with the appointment of a task force headed by former assistant attorney general Eleanor M. Carey of Brand, Lowell & Ryan.