

The Sun

**Rasin named to head state District Court  
Anne Arundel judge known for patience, strong legal mind  
She will succeed Sweeney  
Announcement ends power play between governor, Murphy**

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Martha F. Rasin, an Anne Arundel County judge with a reputation for a strong legal mind and a patient manner, was named yesterday to head Maryland's District Court.

In announcing his selection to one of the top three judicial jobs in the state, Chief Judge Robert C. Murphy of the Court of Appeals praised Rasin's energy and the skill she has shown administering Anne Arundel's District Court the past 11 months.

"I tell her I don't know when she can sleep with all the things she does," Murphy said. "It's absolutely miraculous."

Rasin, 49, succeeds Robert F. Sweeney, who presided over the state's District Court system for its first 25 years. He was forced to step down as chief judge this week when he reached the mandatory retirement age of 70.

Yesterday's announcement by Murphy marked the end of high-stakes private wrangling between Murphy and Gov. Parris N. Glendening. The governor had pressured the chief judge for a role in naming Sweeney's successor, according to sources familiar with their conversations.

Murphy said yesterday that he had reminded the governor in "three or four meetings" on the subject in recent months that the Maryland Constitution gives the chief judge of the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, the authority to name the head of the District Court.

"He didn't fully appreciate that in the beginning," Murphy said of the governor. "But everything is fine as far as I know."

Sources close to Murphy, however, said the entreaties from Glendening annoyed him and the chief judge recently refused a request from the governor to meet again on the subject.

When asked yesterday, Murphy said he had not informed Glendening in advance of his selection of Rasin.

Glendening is deciding on a judge to succeed Murphy, who is himself facing mandatory retirement next month.

The governor had offered Murphy a say in naming his own successor if he allowed Glendening to pick the new District Court chief, sources said.

A gubernatorial spokesman denied yesterday that Glendening had put any pressure on Murphy. "The governor had complete confidence in Judge Murphy making the selection," said spokesman Raymond C. Feldmann.

In a prepared statement, the governor had warm words for Rasin.

"Judge Martha Rasin brings years of judicial and trial experience to this position, which will serve her well," Glendening said.

Rasin, a Chestertown native who lives in Annapolis, has served as a judge in the Anne Arundel District Court since 1989.

She will be paid a salary of \$97,300 to supervise the District Court's 100 judges and 1,200 other employees, and to oversee its annual \$73 million budget. She will be expected to testify before committees of the General Assembly on legislation affecting the court system.

The District Court handles less serious criminal, traffic and civil cases and landlord-tenant disputes. Judges decide cases without juries, and justice often is dispensed at a fast clip.

Rasin said she will spend the next few months getting to know her new job and said she foresaw few major changes in the court system.

"This is a court that moves at 100 miles an hour and rarely misses a beat," she said.

Sweeney, whose last day of work was Monday, said he will spend the next several days working with Rasin.

"I could not be more delighted than I am with Chief Judge Murphy's selection," Sweeney said. "I thought she had the qualities of leadership necessary for a position of this kind."

Sara H. Arthur, a former president of the Anne Arundel County Bar Association who often has argued cases before Rasin, said she brings low-key modesty, good organizational skills and a solid legal mind to the job.

"She is so highly respected on the bench," Arthur said. "Judge Sweeney is going to be a tough act to follow, but she can do it."

Rasin acknowledged the difficulty of succeeding the highly regarded Sweeney.

"If I were to put on water skis, I couldn't fill {Sweeney's} shoes," she said. "But I do intend to try."

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