

For Immediate Release
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JUSTICE THOMAS L. KILBRIDE FILLS CIRCUIT COURT VACANCY

SPRINGFIELD -- Justice Thomas L. Kilbride announced Tuesday the appointment by the Illinois Supreme Court of Eugene P. Daugherty, an established Ottawa attorney, to fill the vacancy of retired Circuit Court Judge Louis J. Perona in the 13th Judicial Circuit.

Mr. Daugherty's appointment is effective Friday, March 23, and he will serve until the seat is filled by the November 2002 election. Mr. Daugherty, 55, said he will seek election.

Justice Kilbride recommended Mr. Daugherty to the Court following an extensive application and evaluation process which included review by an independent committee established by Justice Kilbride and a poll of attorneys in the Circuit by the Illinois State Bar Association.

"The recommendation of Eugene Daugherty was a difficult choice because of the number of qualified candidates," Justice Kilbride said. "He is the managing partner of a major law firm in the area and has broad and extensive legal experience. Based on the evaluation of the screening committee and poll results by the bar association, he is highly respected by his colleagues in the profession and by leaders in the community."

Mr. Daugherty is managing partner of Myers, Daugherty, Berry, O'Connor & Kusma Ltd., with offices in Ottawa and Streator. He has been with that firm since 1982 and has spent 27 years in general practice with an emphasis on civil trial and appellate litigation.

"Mr. Daugherty is a very competent, well-respected attorney who has been managing partner of a law firm that he joined some 20 years ago," said retired Illinois Appellate Judge Tobias G. Barry, who served as chairman of the evaluation committee. "I can say nothing but good about him as a lawyer and as a person."

"He had fine credentials and was a superb candidate," said Timothy L. Bertschy, former president of the Illinois State Bar Association who also sat on the screening committee. "He has experience in litigation—both criminal and civil--and was a candidate coming from a very diverse legal background. We were really impressed with him."

Chief Judge Robert L. Carter of the 13th Circuit, Judge Barry and Mr. Bertschy were part of an 11-person evaluation committee selected by Justice Kilbride to include community input from lawyers and non-lawyers on candidates for the vacancy.

Non-lawyer members included Mayor John Knudson of Marseilles, Chief of Police Tom Kramarsic of LaSalle and school teacher Mary Beth Morelli of Ottawa. The other members of the committee are Jeff Allen, chairman of the Illinois State Bar Association Judicial Advisory Polls Committee; Joseph A. Dailing, executive director of Prairie State Legal Services which provides legal aid to low income persons across northern Illinois; George Black, a Morris lawyer; C.J. Hollerick, first assistant with the Bureau County State's Attorney; and Rebecca Zywicca, a Peru attorney.

In addition to a public application process which drew eight candidates and evaluation by a politically diverse committee, Justice Kilbride utilized a poll of all attorneys in the 13th Circuit conducted by the ISBA. The poll surveyed lawyers on the candidates' integrity, temperament, legal ability and management skills.

"The purpose of the committee and the poll are designed to help me in discharging the very important duty of filling judicial vacancies," Justice Kilbride said. "The committee serves as a cross-section of people in the Circuit who will be served by the judge, and Mr. Daugherity received strong recommendations."

The 13th Circuit is composed of Bureau, Grundy and LaSalle.

Mr. Daugherity attended Streator Township High School, received a Bachelor of Arts from Loyola University and his law degree with honors from DePaul University, where he was associate editor of the Law Review.

He was admitted to the practice of law in 1973.

Mr. Daugherity is a director of the First National Bank of Ottawa and of the First Ottawa Financial Corp. He has been active in community affairs, serving as director and past chairman of the Ottawa YMCA, director of the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce and is a trustee of St. Columba Parish in Ottawa.

"I'll miss working with my partners who have become my family, but I'm happy and grateful for the expression of confidence in me by the Supreme Court in making the appointment," said Mr. Daugherity. "I look forward to the challenge of working for the citizens of the 13th Judicial Circuit."

Under the Illinois Constitution, the Supreme Court is given the authority to fill judicial vacancies during the interim between elections.

Justice Kilbride, elected from the 3rd Judicial District which is made up of 21 counties in north central Illinois, is one of four new members of the Court. He was born in LaSalle, raised in Kankakee and practiced law for 20 years in the Rock Island area before being sworn into office Dec. 4, 2000.