

September 6, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NEW CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERT R. THOMAS OF THE ILLINOIS
SUPREME COURT**

The elevation of Justice Robert R. Thomas to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois will be marked by an installation ceremony Wednesday, September 7 at the Itasca Country Club.

Justice Thomas, elected to the Supreme Court in 2000, is the first Chief Justice from DuPage County in the Court's 187-year history. He was elected Chief by his colleagues on the Court, and his three-year tenure began Tuesday. He succeeds Justice Mary Ann G. McMorrow as Chief.

"I am honored and grateful," Justice Thomas said of his selection. "As Chief Justice, I will commit myself to serving the cause of justice, to walking humbly, and to never lose sight of the tremendous privilege that it is to wear the judicial robe, and to serve the people of this state.

Justice Thomas will be sworn in as Chief by Justice Charles E. Freeman, the most senior member of the Court, following a reception and dinner.

"Ours is a position of service, not of power," Justice Thomas said of his office. "The decisions we render are not personal achievements. They are the law, and they belong to the people of Illinois. Each of us owes a duty both to our colleagues and to the public to ensure that the best possible decision is reached, and that every argument is given full and fair consideration."

Justice Thomas, 53, was elected to the Court from the 2nd Judicial District, which is made up of 13 counties across the northern tier of Illinois, including the populous collar counties ringing Chicago.

He entered the law, and became a judge after a successful career as a kicker in the National Football League for 12 years, 10 of them with the Chicago Bears. He is a 1974 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, was an Academic All-American at Notre Dame and kicked the winning field goal in the 1973 National Championship game for the Irish in the Sugar Bowl against Alabama. Justice Thomas was inducted into the Academic Hall of Fame in 1996 and was a NCAA Silver Anniversary Award Winner in January 1999. That award goes to college athletes who have made lifetime contributions 25 years after their collegiate playing days.

MORE

Justice Thomas' Installation Ceremony

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While playing professional football, Justice Thomas enrolled in Loyola University School of Law, and graduated in 1981. He was a practicing attorney in the area of civil litigation from 1981 to 1988, when he was elected Circuit Judge of the 18th Judicial Circuit which is composed of DuPage County.

While with the Circuit Court in DuPage County, Justice Thomas presided over civil jury trials and was appointed acting Chief Judge from 1989 to 1994. He was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court for the 2nd Judicial District in November 1994.

As Chief Justice, Justice Thomas will serve as the chief administrative officer of the statewide judicial system with supervisory authority over the more than 900 judges in the state.

Among other duties, the Chief Justice controls and schedules the Supreme Court's agenda for consideration in conference by the Court during its seven formal terms each year; supervises all appointments to Supreme Court committees and also serves as chairperson of the Executive Committee of the constitutionally mandated Illinois Judicial Conference. The Conference sets and sponsors much of the judicial education agenda for Illinois judges.

The Chief also serves as the public face of the Court, appearing at many functions as the representative of the Court.

Print and broadcast media wishing to attend the installation ceremony may contact Joseph Tybor, press secretary to the Supreme Court, at 312/793-2323. It is anticipated that the program will begin at about 8:15 p.m. Broadcast media are encouraged to have their equipment set up before that time.

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(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Joseph Tybor, press secretary to the Illinois Supreme Court, at 312/793-2323)

MEDIA NOTE: Itasca Country Club is located one block North of Irving Park Road, five miles West of Route 83, one mile East of Old Route 53 or Rohlwing Road. (From Route 53 or I- 290, exit east at Thorndale Road. Go to the second stop light, Arlington Heights Road, turn right. Follow Arlington Heights Road around the bend to the first stop sign, Walnut Street, and turn left. Go two blocks to Orchard Street, turn left. Orchard Street runs directly into the club.)