

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT FILLS SECOND VACANCY IN WILL COUNTY SUBCIRCUIT**

The Illinois Supreme Court announced Friday the appointment of Sarah F. Jones, an assistant Will County state's attorney with broad legal and trial experience, to fill the judicial vacancy in Subcircuit No. 3 in the Twelfth Judicial Circuit.

Illinois Supreme Court Justice Thomas L. Kilbride of the Third Judicial District recommended the appointment of Ms. Jones after an extensive application, evaluation and interview process that included a review of candidates and recommendation by an independent 15-person advisory committee made up of representatives from the community and the legal profession.

Ms. Jones has been with the state's attorney's office since September 1993 and currently is the courtroom supervisor in the felony division, which handles the most serious criminal cases in Will County. In the last two years, she has tried three murder cases and a reckless homicide case, obtaining guilty verdicts in all four. She also has been certified by the Illinois Supreme Court to serve as co-counsel in death penalty cases as a member of the Capital Litigation Trial Bar, a select group of trained and experienced attorneys and the only lawyers specifically qualified to handle capital cases in Illinois.

Ms. Jones is the second woman to be appointed to the new, legislatively created subcircuits in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. On Thursday, the Illinois Supreme Court, also on the recommendation of Justice Kilbride, appointed Carmen Julia Lynn Goodman to fill Subcircuit No. 4. Ms. Goodman, an assistant public defender, will be the first African American to sit as a Circuit judge in Will County and the first African American woman to sit on the bench in Will County.

"I am honored to be appointed to the subcircuit vacancy in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit," said Ms. Jones. "I would like to thank Justice Kilbride and the Illinois Supreme Court for the faith they placed in me and for giving me the opportunity to continue my career in public service as a member of the judiciary."

Ms. Jones, who received her law degree from Drake University Law School and her B.A. in history from Creighton University, has been the courtroom supervisor in the felony division since August 2006. She also served as courtroom supervisor in the misdemeanor division, where she was responsible for the training of assistant state's attorneys in the high volume courtroom.

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From May 1998 to January 2002, she was chief of the state's attorney's auto theft unit, where she achieved a 93 percent conviction rate in the prosecution of felony auto theft cases.

She also has experience in aggravated criminal sexual cases involving DNA evidence and Class X, the most serious, drug cases.

When Ms. Jones first joined the state's attorney's office in 1993, she was assigned to the juvenile division, where she filed charges and adjudicated felony and misdemeanor cases and interacted with the Department of Children and Family Services in the investigation and prosecution of abuse and neglect petitions, including the termination of parental rights.

In 1994, she was assigned to the aggravated traffic division, which included the prosecution of defendants charged with driving under the influence. In 1996, she was transferred to the narcotics division, and in 1998 she became chief of the auto theft unit.

"She has had excellent relationships with everyone in the prosecution area. She has a good reputation and a vast knowledge of criminal law, which a rapidly growing area like Will County needs in its judges," said Retired Illinois Appellate Justice Tobias Barry, who served as co-chairman of Justice Kilbride's advisory committee.

"She has a remarkably diverse background in the criminal law field, especially with the high levels of responsibility she has been given in felony cases," said Timothy Bertschy, a Peoria attorney who also served as co-chairman of the committee and who is a past president of the Illinois State Bar Association. "This provides her with an excellent background for a judge."

Chief Judge Stephen D. White of the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit welcomed both new judges. "I want to congratulate Ms. Jones and Ms. Goodman," said Chief Judge White, who also sat on the committee. "Both are familiar with the courtrooms and culture of Will County, having served a combined 22 years with the state's attorney and the public defender. I welcome them and look forward to working with them in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit."

Ms. Jones also has been active in community affairs. She is vice president of the Zonta Club of the Joliet area, which is an international service organization consisting of women in business and the professions. The club strives to advance the status of women worldwide. In 2005, the Joliet club raised \$14,500 for a local shelter for homeless women in transition to the workforce. She also is a member of the board of directors of the Will County Bar Association.

Both appointments came after an extensive application, evaluation and interview process used by Justice Kilbride to make recommendations for judicial vacancies in the Third Judicial District. There were a total of 10 applicants for the two subcircuit vacancies.

In addition to the screening committee, the appointment process used by Justice Kilbride consisted of a written survey of registered attorneys in Will County. That survey was conducted by the Illinois State Bar Association.

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Successful applicants also undergo background security checks with police authorities and with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission. Justice Kilbride also sought written comments from the public about the candidates.

The non-lawyer community representatives on the special advisory committee were: Edward L. Breen, a bailiff for the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and former president of Will-Grundy Central Trades and Labor Council; Diane Habiger, property manager for Lincolnshire Properties, Inc., Joliet; Rev. Herbert Brooks, pastor of St. John's Church, Joliet; Carmen Morales, community relations director, Nicor Gas, Joliet; Ann O'Neil, executive vice president of Prairie Trail Credit Union, Joliet; J.D. Ross, executive director of Will-Grundy Medical Clinic and former president of Joliet Community College; Russ Slinkard, president & CEO of Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce; and Eveleyna Y. Washington, vice president of International Association of Machinists Local 851.

In addition to Justice Barry, Chief Judge White and Mr. Bertschy, committee members from the legal community who reviewed Ms. Jones were: Joliet attorney John R. (Jack) Ardaugh, partner at Spesia, Ayers & Ardaugh, and president of the Will County Bar Association; Shorewood attorney Chrystal L. Gavlin; retired U.S. Rep. George E. Sangmeister and Joliet attorney Dorothy Seaborg.

Both appointments are effective January 19 and terminate December 1, 2008 when the positions will be filled by the election in November 2008.

Will County makes up the whole of the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit.

The Third Judicial District is composed of 21 counties across the north central part of the state, stretching from Will, Kankakee and Iroquois counties in the east to Whiteside, Rock Island, Peoria, Mercer, Henderson and Hancock counties in the west.