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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT NAMES MARY K. O'BRIEN TO APPELLATE COURT

SPRINGFIELD – The Supreme Court of Illinois announced Monday the appointment of Mary K. O'Brien, former Illinois state representative, to fill a vacancy on the Illinois Appellate Court in the Third Judicial District.

Ms. O'Brien, who served as chairperson of the House Judiciary Committee on Criminal Law, was appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Thomas J. Homer. She had already announced, and is a certified candidate for election to the same seat.

Ms. O'Brien's credentials were reviewed, and she was recommended for the judicial office by a six-person Judicial Advisory Screening Committee chosen by Justice Thomas L. Kilbride of the Supreme Court.

She has served in the Illinois House from the 75TH District since January 1997, and as head of the Judiciary Committee sponsored several bills dealing with death penalty reform and presided over death penalty reform hearings spanning two years. While in the legislature, she also stayed active in the practice of law and has significant trial experience in the area of child custody and family law.

"She is very articulate with great personal, people-to-people skills," said Richard Eagleton, a Peoria lawyer, former U.S. attorney for the Central District of Illinois, a former chief Circuit Court judge and one of the members of the screening committee. "What impressed me is her experience in family law, which is very essential these days in the Appellate Court. Her experience in the legislature also saw her dealing with some rather difficult criminal issues that came before the Judiciary Committee, and I believe this combined experience will contribute to her making a strong, positive mark on the bench."

Ms. O'Brien resigned her seat in the Illinois House on December 17, a week after giving birth to her second child, a son, Michael Joseph. Combined with her legal and legislative experience, her role as a working mother of an infant and a small child will bring a unique perspective to the Appellate Court.

"I appreciate very much and am thankful for the opportunity that is given me, and the confidence placed in me by the Illinois Supreme Court," Ms. O'Brien said of her appointment. "I look forward to

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doing the very best I can for the people of Illinois, and to be a fair and impartial follower of the law.”

“She is a very genuine person and a very responsible person,” said Illinois Appellate Justice Tobias G. Barry, who served as chair of the screening committee. “From her experience in the legislature, she has a great deal of knowledge in the criminal area of law and she has a practice background in civil and family law.”

As chair of the House Judiciary Committee, Ms. O’Brien was chief co-sponsor of a death penalty reform package signed into law by the Governor in November. She also authored death penalty reform legislation that included the elimination of some eligibility factors and prohibit the imposition of the death sentence for the mentally ill.

She also was the author of legislation to extend the statute of limitations for child sex predators, require lifetime supervision of sex offenders and to expand hearsay exceptions for domestic violence cases.

Ms. O’Brien also was a member of the Legislative Audit Commission, and initiated an investigation into the Illinois Department of Public Aid’s management procedures of the State Child Support Enforcement program.

Since June 2000, she has been a partner in the law firm of O’Brien and Smith and has regularly practiced law since 1993 when she worked in the Grundy County State’s Attorney’s Office under a Supreme Court rule allowing senior law students to practice with the supervision of a licensed attorney.

Ms. O’Brien received her juris doctor degree from the University of Illinois College of Law in December 1993 and her undergraduate degree from Western Illinois University. She began her law firm practice in May 1994 with Cortina, Mueller & O’Brien.

Ms. O’Brien has been a member of the Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee, an influential body that drafts and recommends to the Supreme Court proposals on legal and courtroom procedures. She is a certified child advocate and a member of various bar associations.

In addition to Justice Barry and Mr. Eagleton, other members of the screening committee are Jeff Allen, a former Circuit Court judge and now an associate judge of the of the 12th Judicial Circuit; C.J. Hollerich, former state’s attorney and now an assistant state’s attorney in Bureau County; Ann Keefe, an attorney and former law clerk for 20 years in the Third District Appellate Court; and Rebecca Leynaud, past president of the LaSalle County Bureau Association.

The Third Judicial District is made of these counties: Will, Iroquois, Kankakee, Grundy, LaSalle, Marshall, Putnam, Bureau, Whiteside, Henry, Stark, Peoria, Fulton, Knox, Rock Island, Mercer, Warren, Henderson, Hancock and McDonough.