

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

Volume 158, No. 158

New group will screen applicants

Durbin picks local people to review judicial hopefuls

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U.S. Sen. Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., took a step toward filling the empty seats on Chicago's federal trial bench with the appointment of a screening committee.

The bipartisan committee will recommend applicants for current and future vacancies on the court, Durbin announced today.

Richard A. Devine of Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP and Patricia Brown Holmes of Schiff, Hardin LLP will head the committee.

Devine served as Cook County state's attorney from 1996 to 2008. Holmes previously served as a Cook County Circuit Court judge and a federal prosecutor.

Durbin said he will review the committee's recommendations, interview the finalists and then submit his own recommendations to President Barack Obama after consulting with U.S. Sen. Mark Steven Kirk, R-Ill.

After Obama nominates a candidate to the bench, the matter goes first to the Senate Judiciary Committee and then, if the committee approves the nominee, to the full Senate for a final vote.

"Making recommendations to the White House on judicial nominees is one of the most important jobs I have as a U.S. senator and I am particularly pleased that these outstanding Illinoisans have agreed to advise



Richard J. Durbin

me in selecting the best possible candidates to recommend to President Obama," Durbin said in a written statement.

Chief U.S. District Judge James F. Holderman said he looks forward to getting reinforcements on the bench.

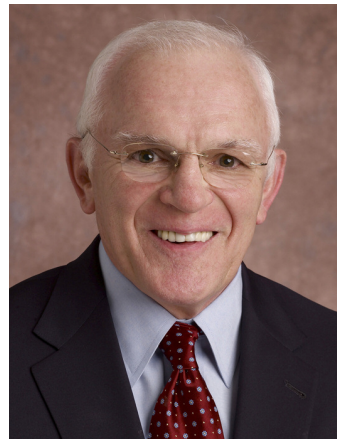
"I'm very pleased that Sen. Durbin has continued to diligently strive to keep the judicial positions of the Northern District of Illinois filled," Holderman said.

One of the three vacancies on the court got created about two years ago when Wayne R. Andersen retired from the bench. Andersen now works with JAMS Inc.

The Senate Judiciary Committee earlier this month unanimously approved the nomination of Thomas M. Durkin of Mayer, Brown LLP to the seat vacated by Andersen.

The other vacancies were created when U.S. District Judge William J. Hibbler died in March and U.S. District Judge Joan B. Gottschall took senior status in April.

One member of the committee



Richard A. Devine

who will screen applicants for those two seats is Philip Harnett Corboy Jr. of Corboy & Demetrio P.C.

Corboy said most of the committee members previously served together reviewing applicants for prior openings on the bench.

"We began with a mandate from Sen. Durbin a number of years ago to pick the best, the brightest and most qualified judges from a pool of talent that was both deep and long," Corboy said. "In our past two group settings, we've selected candidates that have gone on to the federal bench and excelled almost instantly in their new role."

Corboy said the committee hoped to repeat that performance in the future.

Cheryl I. Niro of Robinson, Niro LLC also serves on the committee.

"I consider it an honor and one of the important services to provide given the importance of filing the vacancies in our federal court," Niro said. "So I was



Patricia Brown Holmes

anxious to accept, and I really look forward to working with the group that the senator's put together."

Other committee members include Demetrius E. Carney of Bryan, Cave LLP; Kevin M. Forde of Forde Law Offices LLP; and attorney Betty Y. Jang of Axiom in Chicago.

Also serving on the committee are Paul Logli, president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Rock River Valley, and Michele Ilene Ruiz of Sidley, Austin LLP.

Other committee members are Alison M. Siegler, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School and the director of the school's Federal Criminal Justice Clinic; and Juliet Sorensen, a professor of law with the Northwestern University School of Law Center for International Human Rights.

And serving on the committee are Barry C. Taylor, director of legal advocacy of Equip for Equality Inc.; and Diana C. White, executive director of the Legal Assistance Foundation.