

Chief Justice Edwin L. Pittman announces retirement

March 8, 2004

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Edwin L. Pittman announced today that he will retire, effective March 31, 2004.

Chief Justice Pittman made the announcement this morning to news media in Hattiesburg, where he grew up.

Chief Justice Pittman will speak to the media at 1:30 p.m. today on the third floor of the Gartin Justice Building in Jackson.

Chief Justice Pittman is retiring nine months before the expiration of his elected term, which would end in January 2005. The Governor will appoint someone to serve the unexpired term. A justice will be elected to the next full eight-year term during the Nov. 2 general election.

"My reason for retirement is I'm retirement age," said Chief Justice Pittman, 69. "I've been in government for 40 years. It's time."

Chief Justice Pittman has served on the Mississippi Supreme Court since January 1989. He became chief justice in January 2001.

He served in the Mississippi State Senate from 1964 to 1972; as State Treasurer from 1976 to 1980; as Secretary of State from 1980 to 1984; and as Attorney General from 1984 to 1988. He retired from the Mississippi National Guard as Brigadier General with 30 years of service.

The Mississippi State University Pre-Law Society named Chief Justice Pittman as recipient of the Distinguished Jurist Award for 2002. The Hinds County Bar Association and the Jackson Young Lawyers Association selected Chief Justice Pittman as recipient of the Judicial Innovation Award for 2003.

Chief Justice Pittman said, "I want to thank the people of this state for allowing me to have such a wonderful career. I appreciate every minute of it, but I really am looking forward to retirement. The court has been through a couple of tough years. It's going to be a refreshment of the court to have new faces up here."

Presiding Justice James W. Smith Jr. of Brandon will become the new Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court. The position of Chief Justice is held by the justice with the longest service on the court. Justice Smith began his service on the Supreme Court in January 1994.

The Supreme Court chief justice is the chief administrative officer of the state court system.

Justice Kay B. Cobb of Oxford will become the newest presiding justice of the Supreme Court. Justice Cobb has served on the court since 1999.

The court's other presiding justice is William L. Waller Jr. of Jackson, who assumed the rank of presiding justice on Jan. 5.

The nine-member court usually works in panels of three justices. The Chief Justice presides over one panel. The two justices next in seniority are known as presiding justices, and preside over the two other panels.

A list of court reforms accomplished during Chief Justice Pittman's tenure will follow this release.

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Rule changes adopted by the Mississippi Supreme Court since Jan. 1, 2001

- •Publication of Supreme Court and Court of Appeals dockets on the Supreme Court web site on the Internet began March 30, 2001.
- •Internet broadcast of Supreme Court oral arguments began April 2, 2001. Court of Appeals oral arguments began being broadcast Aug. 7, 2001.
- •Limits were placed on supersedeas bonds in punitive damage appeals with a rule change adopted April 26, 2001.
- •Advisory time standards for trial courts were adopted on Nov. 20, 2001.
- •The Code of Judicial Conduct was revised, effective April 4, 2002.
- •The court on April 4, 2002, revised rules for recusal motions in trial courts. On Oct. 17, 2002, the Supreme Court provided for consideration and en banc review of motions to recuse appellate court judges.
- •The court on April 4, 2002, revised requirements for readmission to the bar by lawyers disbarred following conviction of a felony.
- •The Supreme Court amended the way writs of mandamus to the trial courts are handled in an order adopted Oct. 17, 2002.
- •The court in an amendment adopted Jan. 16, 2003, provided for medical examinations in civil

litigation.

- The court amended its rules regulating the practice of law in Mississippi by attorneys licensed in other states, effective March 1, 2003.
- Discovery rules written for paper documents were modernized to address electronic data on May 29, 2003.
- The court on May 29, 2003, adopted Chancery and Circuit Court rules to require blind assignment of civil cases in the trial courts.
- The court revised trial court rules involving lay witness and expert witness opinion testimony on May 29, 2003.
- Electronic and photographic coverage of state trial and appellate court proceedings were allowed, effective July 1, 2003.
- The court on Feb. 20, 2004, amended rules and commentary dealing with consolidation, joinder and venue in civil litigation