

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

Volume 157, No. 7

Tuesday, January 11, 2011

Durbin forms new judicial recommendations committee

By John Flynn Rooney
Law Bulletin staff writer

Chicago attorney Richard A. Devine will oversee a newly formed 10-member committee chosen by U.S. Sen. Richard J. Durbin to help select district court judges in the Northern District of Illinois.

Other members of the bipartisan committee include Chicago attorneys Kevin M. Forde and Patricia Brown Holmes, along with Paul A. Logli of Rockford.

There are currently three vacancies on the Northern District court.

"We've all made the commitment that this is going to be a top priority for us," Devine, a former Cook County state's attorney, said. "We want the nominees from [the Northern District of] Illinois to be available as soon as possible."

The committee said it hopes to forward names of recommended nominees to Durbin by the first week of March, said Devine, a partner with Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP in Chicago.

"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 me in selecting the best possible candidates to recommend to President Obama," Durbin, an Illinois Democrat, said in a news release.

Durbin was initially elected as a senator in 1996 and is now the senior senator from Illinois. Typically, a state's senior senator recommends candidates for judicial vacancies, U.S. attorney and U.S. marshal to the president.

Newly elected U.S. Sen. Mark Steven

Kirk, a Republican, is the state's other senator.

Durbin plans to consult with Kirk before making recommendations to Obama, the release said.

Kirk will form a similar committee to work in conjunction with Durbin during the selection process, Kate Dickens, a spokeswoman for Kirk, said in an e-mail.

"Without bipartisan effort in the Senate, it is very difficult to secure the confirmation of even the best qualified judicial nominees," Durbin said. "Sen. Kirk and I will be working together to submit the most qualified people for federal judgeships and secure their confirmation."

Chief U.S. District Judge James F. Holderman of the Northern District of Illinois said he hopes that under the next Congress, "the nomination and confirmation process will run more smoothly. I'm looking forward to having these [three] vacancies filled hopefully by the summertime of 2011."

An increase in civil filings has occurred in the Northern District, Holderman said.

"All of the judges are doing extra duty because we do not have the full complement of judges that we should have," Holderman said.

Durbin has used similar committees for recommending potential judicial nominees in the past. The most recent committee was formed in April 2009. Abner J. Mikva, a former federal judge and member of Congress, served as chairman of that committee. Seven members of the committee chaired by Mikva are also members of the newly constituted committee.

The three new committee members are Devine, Logli and lawyer Cheryl L. Niro, a partner with Robinson, Niro LLC Professional Consulting in Chicago and a past president of the Illinois State Bar Association.

"We've got a number of veterans who can show us the ropes," Devine said.

Holmes, currently a partner in Schiff, Hardin LLP's Chicago office, said she looks forward to working on the newly constituted committee.

"I think it's a great process," said Holmes, a former Cook County associate judge.

Logli currently serves as president and chief executive officer of the United Way of Rock River Valley in Rockford. He previously served as the Winnebago County State's Attorney and is a former judge in the 17th Judicial Circuit, northwest of Chicago.

Other current committee members are: Demetrius E. Carney, a partner with Perkins, Coie LLP's Chicago office and president of the Chicago Police Board; Philip Harnett Corboy Jr., a partner with Corboy & Demetrio P.C. in Chicago and a past president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association.

Also, Forde, a former Chicago Bar Association president, Betty Y. Jang, legal counsel with CVS Caremark in Northbrook, Michele Ilene Ruiz, a Sidley, Austin LLP partner, and Diana C. White, executive director of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago.

Applications for the vacancies can be found on Durbin's website, durbin.senate.gov/issues/crime.cfm. Completed applications must be submitted by Jan. 31 at the latest.