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Monday, July 23, 2007

Judiciary



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Fresh Faces for Pittsburgh Courts

State Senate confirms McCarthy, Bubash for Allegheny Co. bench

By Daniel Casciato
Special to the Law Weekly

Earlier this month, the Pennsylvania state Senate confirmed Gov. Edward G. Rendell's nomination of two Allegheny County judicial candidates — attorney Michael E. McCarthy and District Judge Cathleen Bubash — to fill vacancies on Allegheny County Common Pleas Court.

Both were scheduled to be sworn in last week.

The vacancies were created after the death of Judge Walter Little last June and by the appointment of Judge Cynthia Baldwin to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

McCarthy, 57, is chairman of the Allegheny County Board of Viewers, which hears property assessment appeals. Bubash, 47, has been a district judge since 2000.

McCarthy and Bubash won both the Democratic and Republican nominations for judicial seat nominations in the May primary. They will fill the vacancies on the common pleas bench until January 2008.

However, with their victories in the May primary, they are virtually guaranteed to win the general election in November. There are four seats open. Kelly Eileen Bigley, 40, also won one of the top four spots on both tickets.

"I was definitely humbled by the governor's nomination and the process in general of going to Harrisburg and going in front of the judiciary committee," said McCarthy, who came in third on the Democratic ticket and second in the Republican primary in the race for four open seats.

Bubash came in first in the Democratic race and third in the Republican primary.

"I'm looking forward to it," she said. "It's a real challenge. I think my main goal is to listen and learn the methodology of the trial court so I could put my training to good use."

She added, "There's a lot to learn when you move on to the bench. Having done it once, I learned a lot being a lawyer and a lot being a district judge."

Bubash earned her law degree at Duquesne University School of Law. She was admitted to practice in the

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Pennsylvania Supreme Court and the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania.

"I think the amount of legal matter handled by the district level court is huge and is not recognized by many," said Bubash. "I think it's an excellent training ground for trial court."

She has her undergrad degrees from Pennsylvania State University in liberal studies with a philosophy option and from West Virginia University in liberal arts.

McCarthy also earned his law degree at Duquesne University School of Law. He was also in the Allegheny County Police Academy and has a bachelor's degree in English from Duquesne University.

He was appointed by the court to three successive terms as chairman of the board of viewers, Fifth Judicial District. As a special master of the board of viewers, he presided over tax appeals and eminent domain cases.

"I aspired to go to the next level, which is the court of common pleas," said McCarthy, on why he wanted to become a judge. "I think I can contribute something to the court."

McCarthy said his goals during his tenure are simple.

"Essentially I want to work hard and try to do the best job that I possibly can in whatever division I am sent," he said. "It's going to be interesting and challenging." •

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