

# Local judge appointed to appeals court

Richard McAdams named to 6th District by Gov. Davis

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SANTA CRUZ — A two-year vacancy on the 6th District Court of Appeals bench was filled Tuesday with the appointment of Aptos native Richard McAdams.

Gov. Gray Davis' appointment of McAdams, 59, drew praise from the area legal and political community. It also means the Santa Cruz County Superior Court judge won't have to make a decision on whether to seek re-election.

"I was going to face that decision when I got to it," McAdams said Tuesday. "My position was always that I was hoping the appellate appointment would happen for me."

Area attorneys said the governor made a wise decision.

"He holds everyone to their homework," said Lawrence Bremmer, president of the Santa Cruz County Bar Association. "You know one thing — he listens and he has an open mind."

McAdams said he was looking forward to something of a second career on the bench, trading in

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the rapid-fire caseload of Superior Court for the more contemplative environs of an appeals court.

He said he looks forward to the opportunity to at times craft and refine law.

"It's working in a collegial manner, rather than solo as we do here," McAdams said. "It's a chance to really make a difference in people's lives."

The appointment fills a seat left vacant when Chris Cottle, a Santa Cruz County resident, announced his retirement in September 2001.

Also in the running to replace Cottle were Judges Art Danner and Richard Yonts.

"This is a very good appointment for Santa Cruz County," Danner said. "Judge McAdams will be a great representative for Santa Cruz County."

Attempts to contact Yonts failed.

The length of time the seat was held vacant had legal and political observers in an uproar as they feared Santa Cruz County's traditional presence on the appellate bench might come to an end. Before Cottle, county resident Harry Brauer had served on the appellate court.

"We have a number of qualified judges over here who were imminently qualified and it made no sense to look elsewhere," said Les Gardner, a member of the county Democratic Central Committee. "There are a number of cases they hear that originate from here. It never hurts to have a local perspective."

County Democrats had pressured Davis to appoint a judge from Santa Cruz County, and increased the pressure as the recall saga gained steam. The Board of Supervisors also penned a letter in June to Davis, urging the post be filled by a county judge.

With the seat filled, the race for the Superior Court seat left vacant by McAdams is headed for a March 4, 2004, Election Day.

Thus far, three candidates have filed intent-to-run papers at the county courthouse: attorney Mike Barsi, prosecutor Christine McGuire and court commissioner Irwin Joseph.

Terms for the office are six years, and incumbents rarely face opposition. If no candidate wins a majority in March, the two getting the most votes vie for the seat in a run-off election in November.

McAdams has been a trial judge since 1977, when he was appointed by Gov. Jerry Brown to the Santa Cruz Municipal Court.

McAdams earned his bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley and his law degree from Hastings Law School.

He began his legal career in 1969 with the firm of Jarvis, Miller and Stender, handling personal injury cases.

From 1970-73, he was an attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Santa Cruz. During that time, he founded Senior Citizens Legal Services, which served as a nationwide model for serving elderly indigents.

"Judge McAdams started the program and got it off the ground," said Terry Hancock, a current attorney with Senior Citizens Legal Services. "He was a great supporter of those issues."

Beginning in 1973, McAdams was a partner at Fox, McAdams and Popin, where he handled civil suits, personal injury, family law, workers compensation and small business cases.

Since 1999, he has presided over the civil department of Superior Court, where he handled half the civil cases filed in the county.

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