

Cottle joins Court of Appeal ^{Be}

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9-30-88

SAN JOSE — Chris Cottle was sworn in Thursday as an associate justice for the state's Sixth District Court of Appeal.

The swearing-in ceremony followed confirmation of his nomination by the Commission on Judicial Appointments. Cottle, 48, who previously sat on the Santa Cruz County Superior Court, was nominated last month by Gov. George Deukmejian.

State Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas, Attorney General John Van De Kamp and Justice Nat Aguillano of the Sixth District Court of Appeal made the confirmation.

A number of representatives of the Santa Cruz criminal justice system attended, including Superior Court judges Bill Kelsay, John Marlo and Tom Black, District Attorney Art Danner, Watsonville Police Chief Ray Belgard and Public Defenders Larry Biggam, Jon Minsloff and Jerry Christensen.

Justice Harry Brauer, who sits

on the Court of Appeal, and local attorney Sara Clarenbach testified on Cottle's behalf.

"This judge is a worker and what this court needs is a worker," said Brauer. He noted that even though Cottle is one of three new associate justices — doubling the size of the court — there is a backlog of 250 fully-briefed cases to be heard.

Brauer told the panel he considers Cottle "extremely competent" and predicted Cottle would have no difficulty assuming his new role.

Clarenbach, former president of the county Bar Association, said Cottle "has earned the widespread support of the entire bar."

She said Cottle is considered to be a "bright" judge.

Clarenbach also referred to Cottle's previous tenure as county district attorney, telling the committee that Cottle served with "great effectiveness" as district attorney and brought "a high moral tone" to the office.

Cottle, a graduate of Stanford's

Hastings College of the Law, was elected district attorney in 1974. He was appointed to his Superior Court judgeship in 1977.

A representative of the state bar testified that more than 500 questionnaires were sent out to those in the Santa Cruz legal community regarding Cottle's appointment. She said there was no criticism deemed significant.

A San Jose gadfly attempted to voice his contempt for the entire nomination and confirmation process, lending a Santa Cruz flair to the proceedings, but Van De Kamp said the remarks — submitted in advance — had no bearing on Cottle's qualifications.

Two state police officers stood behind the man as he demanded time to speak, but he left quietly when his demand was rejected.

A visiting judge will be appointed to fill in on the bench in Superior Court until Deukmejian announces a replacement for Cottle.

Judge Black said at Thursday's ceremony he expects a decision in January.