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Justice Charles T. Wells Announces His Retirement from the Florida Supreme Court

TALLAHASSEE – At a meeting this afternoon, Justice Charles T. Wells has notified Gov. Charlie Crist that he will retire from the Florida Supreme Court effective at the close of business on March 3, 2009.

“It has been my great privilege to serve the people of our State since June 1994 as a Justice on the Florida Supreme Court,” Wells said. “The work has been challenging as well as fascinating. I have reviewed and found reason to have great respect for the diligent work of the Judges of Florida’s Courts and their support staff. I am grateful for all that these Judges have done to support me in my work and for their friendship.”

Wells was appointed to the state’s high court by Gov. Lawton Chiles and assumed office on June 16, 1994. He presided as Florida’s 49th Chief Justice from July 1, 2000, through June 30, 2002, a period that included the tumultuous 2000 presidential election cases, the terrorist attacks of September 2001, and the anthrax attacks that followed soon thereafter.

He has lectured extensively on a variety of legal subjects but was especially in demand to talk about the Florida Supreme Court’s processing and administration of the election cases. The administrative and public relations techniques developed in these cases have been studied by courts throughout the nation in advance of each of the following presidential elections.

As a result of these emergencies, then-Chief Justice Wells spearheaded the creation of statewide and local Florida court emergency management plans still in place today, which have become a model used by state courts throughout the nation and have been featured at national and international court educational conferences.
These emergency plans were tested and proven highly successful during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, resulting in a minimum disruption of state court operations as the storms hit throughout Florida.

A native Floridian, Wells was born in Orlando in 1939 to Julia Talley Wells and J.R. Wells and later graduated from William R. Boone High School. He received his bachelors and law degrees from the University of Florida and went on to practice law in Orlando, except for a one-year stint with the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., in 1969.

Wells and his wife Linda, who also is a lawyer, have three children and six grandchildren.

Wells will be honored at a formal retirement ceremony in the main courtroom on February 6, 2009, at 11:00 a.m. This event is open to the public and currently is scheduled to be broadcast live statewide on The Florida Channel, and over the World-Wide Web from the Court’s webcasting site at http://www.wfsu.org/gavel2gavel/.

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