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At least three seeking judgeship

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By AMY LINDBLOM

At least three Sonora attorneys want to replace Tuolumne County Superior Court Judge William Polley, who is retiring March 1, after 16 years on the bench.

County Counsel Gregory Oliver, District Attorney Donald Segerstrom and James Boscoe, the superior court commissioner for Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, this week confirmed that they have applied to take over Polley's court.

Sonora defense attorney Mark Borden, whom many in the legal community said may have applied, declined to comment.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will make the appointment. But his office does not disclose who is seeking judicial appointments or when such appointments will be announced.

Polley, 66, was appointed in 1989 by then-governor George Deukmejian and reelected in 1997 and 2004. His term expires in 2009. Whoever replaces him will serve until then and then must face election.

The appointment process requires that each candidate submit a lengthy application stating their qualifications, a list of their 10 most important court cases and the names of 50 to 75 people who

can serve as references.

Members of the governor's judicial appointment staff review the applications, and names of qualifying candidates are forwarded to the State Bar of California Judicial Nominees Evaluation Commission.

The commission then contacts at least 50 of each applicant's references, plus as many as 50 more people from whom commissioners may seek confidential evaluations.

The commission's top choice or choices are then sent to the governor's office for a final decision.

Julie Soderlund, Schwarzenegger's deputy press secretary, said the evaluation process can take months. But she added that the governor's office will strive to appoint a new judge before Polley steps down.

Oliver said he is also seeking a soon-to-be-vacant judge's position in San Joaquin County.

The annual salary for a trial court judge in Tuolumne County is \$145,803 plus benefits.

Soderlund said superior court judgeships are non-partisan. Since Schwarzenegger, a Republican, has taken office, he has appointed about an equal number of Democrats and Republicans to benches throughout the state, she said.

Oliver and Boscoe are Republicans and Segerstrom is a Democrat.

A look at the three confirmed judge hopefuls:

JAMES BOSCOE, 63, has a law degree from Santa Clara University and has been a lawyer since 1969. He now presides over the Tuolumne County Superior Court drug court and is the family law child support commissioner for Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

An alternative to criminal court, drug court involves professionals from the county probation and mental health departments. They and Boscoe team up to help select convicted drug abusers get and stay sober, get training and employment, and reunite with their families.

Boscoe has also been a Tuolumne County deputy district attorney, a city attorney for Sonora, a Tuolumne County deputy county counsel and a San Joaquin County deputy public defender. He has also had private law practice.

Boscoe has served as commissioner, which is a step below judge, for eight years.

"As a judge you make decisions that have long and lasting impacts on people's lives," Boscoe said. "I think I have the right temperament to do a good job and have proven that over the last eight years as commissioner."

He and his wife Linda live in Sonora.

GREGORY OLIVER, 42, has been Tuolumne County's lead attorney since September 2000 when the Board of Supervisors named him to replace departing County Counsel Patrick Greenwell.

He was reappointed in 2004.

Oliver received his law degree from Golden Gate University School of Law in December 1991 and worked in private law firm in Modesto until being hired here in 1995 as deputy county counsel.

Oliver was born and raised in Manteca.

An active Rotarian, Oliver is currently an assistant district governor for the service group.

He said being a judge would be the "epitome" of his legal career.

"I have a great need to perform public services, and being a judge is the greatest public service I can think of," he said.

Oliver is single and lives in Mi-Wuk Village.

DONALD SEGERSTROM, the county's lead criminal prosecutor, was born and raised in Sonora. He received his law degree from the University of California at Davis in 1981.

As a young lawyer just out of law school, Segerstrom clerked for Frances Carr, a judge on the Third District Court of Appeal in Sacramento, who sparked his desire to someday be a judge.

"Being a judge is an intellectually challenging job," he said. "As a judge you are no longer an advocate for one side or the other. You have an opportunity to find the correct answers to legal questions based on the law. ? Being a judge in this community would be the highest honor I could think of. It would be a true privilege."

Segerstrom has been on both sides of the courtroom as a criminal prosecutor and and defense attorney. Before being appointed district attorney in 2000, Segerstrom had a private law practice in Sonora for 12 years. Much of his practice involved real estate litigation and criminal defense.

Segerstrom gained national attention in 1993 when he helped defend Ellie Nesler, the Sonora woman accused of the courtroom killing of her son's alleged molester.

Segerstrom, his wife Sharon and their two children live in Sonora.

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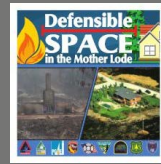
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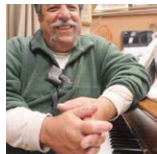
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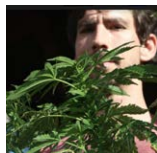
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