

# Area attorneys uncertain about high court nominee

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Oakland County residents — Republicans and Democrats alike — expressed reserved respect for outgoing Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

But they had too little information about Clarence Thomas — Thurgood's possible successor — to speculate about the kind of judge he would be on the high court if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

"I simply don't know enough about the man to have an opinion about him," said Thomas A. Law, a West Bloomfield lawyer who is also a Republican county commissioner.

Robert L. Willis, a Southfield attorney associated with the South Oakland Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), said he prefers to withhold judgment on Thomas, a 43-year-old judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

"I'm concerned. I worry about his views on abortion and affirmative action," Willis said Tuesday. "But all I know about him is what's in the newspapers..." and then it depends on whose column you read. I'd say the jury is still out."

DONALD TUCKER, a lawyer who lives in Birmingham and practices in Southfield, reflected the sentiments of many Democrats when he said he was concerned that Bush would replace Marshall, an avowed champion of civil liberties, with a conservative.

Tucker, chairman of the Oakland County Democratic Party, made his comments hours before Bush announced the name of his nominee. But he said his concern was valid, regardless of who the president might nominate.

Thurgood Marshall was a giant in upholding individual rights against intrusion by government, Tucker said. "I'm concerned that President Bush might replace him with someone who is a qualified, but is (philosophically) a doctrinaire (inflexible) social conservative."

"Bush's appointments so far have been very solid lawyers or judges in their legal reasoning. But in my opinion they do not have the concern for individual freedoms."

EMMORY J. BAILEY, a lawyer from Bloomfield Hills, said he respected Thurgood Marshall and the ideals he brought to the Supreme Court. His successor would have an important legacy.

While most of the people contacted by The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers said Marshall — the only black justice in the 201 year history of the supreme court — was a positive influence on the Supreme Court, Thomas Law offered a note of caution.

"I think he stayed (on the court) too long," he said. "I think there should be a mandatory retirement

age for Supreme Court judges. "I don't know what the magic retirement age should be. But they (Justices) shouldn't stay around forever."

Marshall had a distinguished career as a civil rights attorney before being appointed to the high court in 1967 by President Lyndon Johnson. Marshall is 83 and while announcing his retirement said he was having serious health problems.

As a lawyer and as a Republican, Law found it more than acceptable that Bush nominated a black to replace Marshall. "It's good that many nationalities are represented on the high court," he said. "As long as they are qualified and objective."

While reserving judgement on nominee Thomas, Willis said that both personally and as a representative of the NAACP, he found it disturbing that Bush appeared to be stacking the high court with conservatives.

"I didn't particularly like it when the liberals did it," Willis said. "And I don't like stacking the court by conservatives."

# Back in saddle County exec expects to finish term

By Pat Murphy  
staff writer

Aling Oakland County Executive Daniel T. Murphy has a definite retirement date in mind: Dec. 31, 1992.

That's the last day of the current four-year term he is serving, said Murphy, who fully expects to finish out his current four-year term of office.

"I've finished therapy and I feel fine," the 67-year-old Murphy said Monday, after holding a staff meeting and spending several hours in the office. "I expect to spend a few hours in the office every day now."

Murphy has been out of full-time

commission since suffering a stroke on Jan. 5 and a separate setback April 12.

His comments about finishing his term come as no surprise to those close to him. But they do dash cold water on hot rumors about someone replacing Murphy if falling health forced the executive into early retirement.

Murphy fueled speculation that his health might force him to retire sooner than expected during a newspaper interview in early May. In that article Murphy said that as badly as he wanted to finish out his term, his health might not permit it and he might be forced to step down early.

HIS STROKE and circulatory

problems left him with slightly slurred speech and a gimpy arm and leg.

The unofficial word around county offices was Murphy had imposed a June 30 deadline on himself, at which time he planned to assess his progress in therapy and make a decision about stepping down early.

"I don't know where that (particular rumor) came from," said Murphy, who acknowledged that rumors sometimes seem to have a life of their own. "I want to end that rumor right now."

His comments Monday were intended to squash any remaining rumors, Murphy said. "I'm ready to go," he said. "I even had a few days to visit my son in Texas."

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