

Local judge may head Michigan Court of Appeals

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Judge Martin M. Doctoroff, a Birmingham resident, is one of two leading contenders to succeed retiring Judge Robert J. Danhof as chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Doctoroff, a partner in the Southfield firm of Bushnell, Gage, Doctoroff and Heinen until being appointed in 1987, is vying to be only the third chief judge since the court of appeals came into existence in January, 1965.

The other leading candidate is Myron H. Wahls of Detroit who has been on the appeals court since 1982.

The role of chief judge on the 24-judge appeals court is largely administrative. Besides serving on three-judge panels to hear cases, the chief judge has ultimate responsibility for personnel and budget functions as well as liaison with the state legislature. Besides Danhof, a Republican from Grand Rapids who became chief judge in April, 1976, the only other person to hold that title is T. John Lesinski.



file photo

Birmingham attorney Martin Doctoroff says the court of appeals, like other institutions, faces tough days ahead because of increased caseload and limited resources.

THE APPEALS COURT judges are scheduled to hold a regular meeting Friday, and electing a successor to Danhof — who is stepping down Feb. 29, is expected to be a high visibility item.

"Doctoroff and Wahls are the leading contenders," said one court official. But there's always a chance of an upset candidate.

Doctoroff Tuesday declined to comment about the possibility of being the next chief judge other than to say he'd consider the job a challenge. "This is a tough time for the appeals court," he said. "The caseload continues to grow at a time resources are becoming more scarce."

Doctoroff maintains an office in Southfield. But as an appeals court judge, he normally rotates assignments, largely in the court's main offices in Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit.

Doctoroff, who was born in Cambridge, Mass., has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a law degree from the University of Michigan.

He was an FBI agent before turning to private practice in 1960, where he specialized in domestic relations. In 1979, he was a special prosecutor for the Oakland County Grand Jury.

Doctoroff was appointed to the court of appeals by Gov. James

Blanchard to replace Judge S. Jerome Bronson of Franklin, who committed suicide in November, 1986, after being arraigned on charges of bribery.

Doctoroff and his wife, Allene, have lived in Birmingham since 1969. They have four sons. Allene Doctoroff is a psychologist who practices in Birmingham.

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