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No word on new judge to replace Clulo

By [Angela E. Lackey](#)
10/08/2007

Judge Paul J. Clulo retired from the Midland County Circuit Court on Aug. 3. Since then, four area attorneys have interviewed for the position, but a replacement still has not been named.

"We're very, very focused on getting this budget resolution passed," said Megan Brown, a communications representative from Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office. "It is an appointment we are working on. We're always committed to finding the best person to serve."

Attorneys Charlotte Allen, Michael Beale, Robert Dunn and Stephen Durance were interviewed by Michigan's state bar qualification committee on July 10.

Durance withdrew his name from consideration in August. Allen did not return a call for comment.

Beale said he was interviewed a second time on Sept. 14, this time by the Michigan Alliance for Justice (formerly Michigan Trial Lawyers).

Word around town is that Beale is a front runner for the position, which he said was "flattering" but unconfirmed.

"I'm pretty certain when anybody hears anything it will be around town pretty quickly," he said.

Beale is a 1990 graduate of the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. He clerked for Michigan Supreme Court Justice James Brickley for two years, and then joined a Detroit law firm, working in its Petoskey office. He has been with Handlon, Eastman, DeWitt and Beale in Midland since 1995.

"I think that would be a rewarding avenue to take in my career," Beale said of being a judge. He said it would take about 30 to 45 days to clear his schedule and go on the bench if appointed.

"My partners could absorb a lot of the work I have," Beale said.

Dunn, an attorney who practices in Midland and Bay counties, said he also hasn't heard anything from Lansing. He is concerned about the length of time it has taken to appoint a replacement for Clulo.

"It's getting to be to the point where I don't know how much longer some of us can hang in there," he said.

He said the person appointed would have to get established and then start a campaign — the position is up for election next year.

"It would make it very difficult, as a Democratic appointee in a Republican community," Dunn said.

He said it would take at least three weeks to unwind his law practice and make sure his clients got replacement lawyers. He also teaches at Delta College, and soon will have to decide about his schedule for next semester.

"I need to know how many classes to schedule for next term. I need to plan," Dunn said. "It can't go too much longer."

Beale said he is willing to wait for Granholm to make the appointment.

"I think I'm in for the long haul. I don't anticipate withdrawing in the near future," he said.

In the meantime, Probate Judge Dorene Allen and Circuit Court Judge Jonathan Lauderbach have taken over the bulk of Clulo's cases.

"It's difficult. We're doing our best to manage the caseload," said Trial Court Administrator Jerome M.P. Kole. "It's resulting in a lot of long days."

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