

Gov. Pillen Appoints Derek Vaughn as Associate Supreme Court Justice

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LINCOLN, NE – Today, Governor Jim Pillen announced his appointment of the Honorable Derek Ray Vaughn of Omaha to the Nebraska Supreme Court, representing the Second Judicial District. His appointment fills the vacancy left by Justice Miller-Lerman who stepped down Oct. 31 after 33 years of service.

“Judge Vaughn has notable experience as a judge and as a prosecutor,” said Gov. Pillen. “He has a heart for the Omaha community and a long-standing history of public service. His integrity and commitment to the law are evident and I’m pleased to promote him to this role on the Nebraska Supreme Court.”

Standing next to his wife Jacqueline, his children Raionna and Darius, and other family members including his mother Shirley, Justice Vaughn offered his profound appreciation.

“I’m grateful to Gov. Pillen for this amazing opportunity,” said Justice Vaughn. “I look forward to continuing my service to the people of Nebraska.”

Since August 2023, Justice Vaughn has been a district court judge in Douglas County. Prior to that, he was a county court judge for 10 years, also in Douglas County. He spent several years in the Douglas County Attorney’s Office, handling criminal and civil cases as well as a considerable caseload for the county’s problem-solving courts.

Justice Vaughn has been an adjunct instructor at several regional colleges and universities including the University of Nebraska – Omaha (UNO), Midland University and Dana College. He has served on a number of boards including the City of Omaha Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the Urban League of Nebraska Board of Directors, the Nebraska Coalition for Juvenile Justice and the Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Board.

Justice Vaughn is part of the Nebraska Bench Media Committee, which works to foster positive and professional relationships between attorneys, courts and the media. He is also involved with the Salem Baptist Church and is a coordinator for the Zion Baptist Church Wild Game Feast.

During today's announcement, Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly talked about his longstanding friendship with Justice Vaughn, which began more than 20 years ago when they were both prosecutors. Lt. Gov. Kelly highlighted a few of the things that made Justice Vaughn a great fit for the state Supreme Court -- one of those being Justice Vaughn's love of community and things he did "off of the bench."

"He's a people person," continued Lt. Gov. Kelly. "He likes to meet people, he likes to learn about what they're doing, what they're up to and he listens. Listening is a great part of the job."

Justice Vaughn has a bachelor's degree in secondary education and earned his juris doctor from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) College of Law.

The Nebraska Supreme Court Second Judicial District consists of Douglas County.

