



Kansas Courts News Release

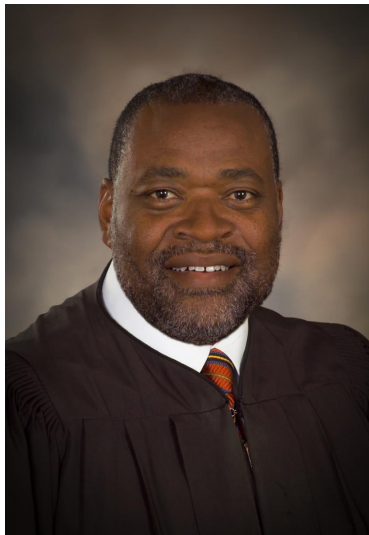
Office of Judicial Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*District Judge Joseph D. Johnson,
Shawnee County District Court*

Shawnee County District Court Judge Joseph D. Johnson to retire

TOPEKA—Shawnee County District Court Judge Joseph D. Johnson will retire July 31 after 13 years on the bench.

Johnson is a graduate of Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina and the University of Kansas School of Law. He began work in the Topeka public defender's office in 1975, then opened his private

practice two years later, focusing primarily on criminal defense. He was in private practice for 28 years before his 2005 appointment to the bench in the 3rd Judicial District by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. He was the first African-American judge in the history of the judicial district, which is composed of Shawnee County.

Johnson said he has seen small steps of progress in the Kansas judicial ranks when it comes to diversity. With his retirement, he said, "Kansas will have only three African-American district court judges and one serving on the Kansas Court of Appeals."

In addition to his judicial duties, Johnson teaches at the National Criminal Defense College at the Mercer University School of Law in Macon, Ga.; the Trial Advocacy Institute at the University of Wyoming School of Law in Laramie; and the Intensive Trial Advocacy Program at Yeshiva University Cardoza School of Law in New York. He holds memberships in the National and State Criminal Defense Lawyers Associations, the American College of trial Lawyers, and the American Board of Criminal Lawyers.

After more than a decade of serving as a judge, Johnson said at times the responsibility of the office is overwhelming.

"When I was in practice, my viewpoint was primarily from the person I was representing," he said. "Sometimes I felt the court was taking the easy way out. After taking the bench, it became clear to me that making the right decision was overwhelming. It's very difficult to assess what the judge has to go through. From that standpoint, it was quite humbling. There was a lot more to it than I thought."

Johnson said he appreciates the trust and support extended to him by the residents of Shawnee County and hopes his service lived up to their expectations.

In retirement, Johnson said he plans to continue lecturing and teaching and to play golf in each of the 50 states.

Johnson and his wife have two children, three grandsons, and two granddaughters.

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