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More Shake-Ups On The Michigan Supreme Court

By Drew Broaddus

Hours ago, newly elected Governor Rick Snyder announced the appointment of Court of Appeals Judge Brian Zahra to the Michigan Supreme Court. Judge (soon to be Justice) Zahra will replace Justice Maura Corrigan, who recently accepted Governor Snyder's appointment as Director of the State Department of Human Resources. Justice Corrigan will leave the Court later this week.

Judge Zahra graduated from Dearborn Divine Child High School in 1977. He earned a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University in 1984, and a J.D. from the University of Detroit Law School in 1987. In law school, he served as a member of the Law Review and as Articles Editor to the State Bar of Michigan's Corporation and Finance Business Law Journal. He began his legal career in 1987 as a law clerk to Judge Zatkoff of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Two years later, he went into private practice. He was appointed to the Wayne County Circuit Court in 1994. After serving four years in the Third Circuit, Governor John Engler appointed him to the Michigan Court of Appeals in December 1998. In 2004, he ran for the Michigan Supreme Court.

During his time on the Court of Appeals, Judge Zahra served as Chief Judge Pro Tem for the 2006-07 term. He also served on numerous legal committees and boards. His current appointments include service on the Committee on Model Civil Jury Instructions and the Michigan Board of Law Examiners. He is also a member of the Federalist Society, which he has served as secretary and vice-president, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic Lawyers Society.

Judge Zahra will be the third new Michigan Supreme Court Justice in less than six months. In August 2010, Justice Elizabeth Weaver surprisingly resigned her post. The timing of the decision was controversial, as it allowed outgoing Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm to appoint her replacement – rather than allowing Justice Weaver to face potential defeat at the polls in November. Governor Granholm appointed former Court

SECRET WARDLE NOTES:

There have been three new justices appointed or elected to Michigan's High Court in the last six months. The net effect is that there is a new conservative majority in place. It is widely anticipated that this new conservative Court will issue decisions similar to those decided when Clifford Taylor was still on the Court. Good days are ahead for defendants.

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of Appeals Judge Alton Davis to the Court, thereby allowing Justice Davis to run as an incumbent in the November 2010 election. However, Justice Davis was not re-elected, and was replaced earlier this month by former Wayne County Circuit Judge Mary Beth Kelly.

Comments made by Judge Zahra during his 2004 bid for the high Court, as well as during his 2006 Court of Appeals re-election campaign, suggest that he is very much in line with Justice Corrigan on several key issues. Thus, it is expected that he will form a Republican majority with Chief Justice Robert Young, Justice Stephen Markman, and Justice Mary Beth Kelly.

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