



United States District Court

Eastern District of Tennessee
Howard H. Baker Jr. U.S. Courthouse
800 Market Street
Knoxville, TN 37902

Thomas A. Varlan
Chief Judge

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PRESS RELEASE

JUDGE REEVES TO BECOME CHIEF JUDGE OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

U.S. District Judge Pamela L. Reeves will become the chief judge of the Eastern District of Tennessee on April 1, succeeding U.S. District Judge Thomas A. Varlan, who has held the chief judgeship for the past seven years.

Judge Reeves is the first woman to hold a district judgeship in the Eastern District of Tennessee and becomes the first woman to hold the district's chief judge position in the court's 222-year history. She was nominated to her judgeship in 2013 by President Barack Obama and confirmed unanimously by the U.S. Senate in 2014. She was sworn in by Chief Judge Varlan on March 10, 2014, and he will administer the oath of office for chief judge to her on Monday, April 1 at 9:30 a.m., at the Howard H. Baker, Jr. Federal Courthouse.

The chief judge serves as the lead judicial administrative officer for the district and oversees the day to day operations of the court. The post of chief judge was established in 1948 by the Judicial Conference of the United States, the policy-making body of the federal judiciary, to handle the judicial administrative duties in each of the country's 94 judicial districts. The chief judgeship rotates every seven years to the next judge in seniority who is under the age of 65.

Judge Reeves graduated summa cum laude from the University of Tennessee in 1976 and received her Juris Doctor degree from the UT College of Law in 1979. She practiced law in Knoxville until her appointment. She served as the first female president of the Tennessee Bar Association from 1998 to 1999, is a Master of the American Inns of Court, and past president of the American College of Civil Trial Mediators.

Chief Judge Varlan stated, “Given Judge Reeves’s legal and administrative background, both in private practice and as a judge, she is eminently qualified to lead our district as the next chief judge. Judge Reeves’s contributions to the legal profession and to her community are far-reaching, and her becoming our court’s first female chief judge is a tribute to her and a historic milestone for our district. I look forward to working with her as she transitions to this important leadership role.”

As she approaches the chief judgeship, Judge Reeves said, “I am both honored and humbled to assume this position. Fortunately, Chief Judge Varlan and the team he has put together in the last seven years has the court working so smoothly, I am confident we can make a seamless transition. I look forward as chief judge to helping our court serve the citizens of the Eastern District of Tennessee.”

Judges Reeves and Varlan are two of the four active district judges currently serving the Eastern District of Tennessee. The others are Judge Harry S. Mattice and Judge Travis McDonough, Chattanooga. In addition, there are four district judges serving the district in senior status, a semi-retirement position. They are Judges Leon Jordan and Thomas W. Phillips, Knoxville; Judge Curtis L. Collier, Chattanooga; and Judge J. Ronnie Greer, Greeneville.

Judge Jordan, who has served as a district judge for more than 30 years, said, “Throughout her time with the court, Judge Reeves has shown a strong work ethic and judicial temperament. Her collegiality with the other judges is outstanding, and she will serve our district well as the next chief judge.”

The Eastern District of Tennessee is the largest federal district in Tennessee, composed of 41 counties serving 2.5 million people, with courthouses in Knoxville, Greeneville, Chattanooga, and Winchester. In addition to its eight active and senior district judges, there are five magistrate judges and four bankruptcy judges serving the district.

Previous chief judges of the Eastern District have included: Judges James H. Jarvis, Robert L. Taylor, and George C. Taylor, Knoxville; Judges Leslie R. Darr, Frank W. Wilson, H. Ted Milburn, R. Allan Edgar, and Curtis L. Collier, Chattanooga; and Judge Thomas Gray Hull, Greeneville.

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