



**United States District Court
District of Minnesota**

Patrick J. Schiltz, Chief Judge
Kate M. Fogarty, Clerk of Court
612-664-5080

Warren E. Burger
Federal Building and U.S.
Courthouse
316 North Robert Street
St. Paul, MN 55101

Edward J. Devitt
U.S. Courthouse and
Federal Building
118 South Mill Street
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Gerald W. Heaney
Federal Building and U.S.
Courthouse and
Customhouse
515 West First Street
Duluth, MN 55802

Diana E. Murphy
U.S. Courthouse
300 South Fourth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

December 21, 2022

NEWS RELEASE

**United States District Court, District of Minnesota
Appointment of Jerry W. Blackwell as District Judge**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN – Jerry W. Blackwell has been appointed as the newest District Judge for the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota, filling the vacancy created when Judge Susan R. Nelson took senior status at the end of 2021. Chief Judge Patrick J. Schiltz administered the oath of office to Judge Blackwell on December 21, 2022.

Chief Judge Schiltz praised the appointment of Judge Blackwell: “Jerry Blackwell is one of the most experienced and respected trial lawyers in Minnesota. It is difficult to imagine a lawyer who is better qualified to serve as a United States District Judge.” Chief Judge Schiltz also noted the historic nature of Judge Blackwell’s appointment. Judge Blackwell is the third African American to serve on the federal court in Minnesota, following Judge Michael J. Davis and Judge Wilhelmina M. Wright.

Judge Blackwell received his Bachelor of Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was a Morehead-Cain scholar. Judge Blackwell then received his Juris Doctor from the University of North Carolina School of Law. Judge Blackwell is the recipient of numerous awards, including Minnesota Attorney of the Year, the National Law Journal Winning Litigator Award, Benchmark Litigation Lifetime Achievement Award, BTI Client Service Super All Star, the National Bar Association Commercial Section Vanguard Lifetime Achievement Award, the University of North Carolina Distinguished Alumnus Award, Minnesota Super Lawyer, and the Greater Washington Urban League Courage Under Fire Award.

Judge Blackwell was the founding partner, CEO, and chairperson of Blackwell Burke P.A., a law firm that served as trial counsel for several major corporations and that represented clients in 47 states and internationally. Judge Blackwell has made presentations to the Federal Bar Association, American Bar Association, Minnesota State Bar Association, National Bar Association, International Association of Defense Counsel, and the American Association for Justice, and to various Fortune 500 clients and trade organizations.



Judge Blackwell is an active member of his community, recently serving as lead Special Assistant Attorney General in the prosecution of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. In 2020, in tandem with the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, Judge Blackwell and his firm secured the first posthumous pardon in Minnesota history for Max Mason, a young Black man who was wrongfully convicted of raping a White woman in 1920. Judge Blackwell is also a founder of the Minnesota Association of Black Lawyers (MABL), a bar association that promotes the professional development of Black lawyers, judges, and law students in Minnesota, and advances education, excellence, and racial equity in the pursuit of justice. In 2011, Governor Mark Dayton appointed Judge Blackwell to serve as an at-large member of the Minnesota Commission on Judicial Appointments.

Judge Blackwell enjoys beekeeping and meditation, and he is an avid hobby farmer. He will be chambered in the Warren E. Burger U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building in St. Paul.

Additional questions can be directed to Public Information Officer Rebeccah Parks at Rebeccah_Parks@mnd.uscourts.gov.

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