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O'Rourke nominated for state judgeship

Westchester County
exec expected to get
Court of Claims post

By Ed Tagliarini
Staff Writer

Westchester County Executive Andrew O'Rourke was nominated yesterday by Gov. George Pataki to be a judge in the state Court of Claims.

The announcement signals the fulfillment of a career-long dream of the Republican official to serve as a judge.

O'Rourke, 64, who is leaving

office after 15 years at the end of December, is likely to be approved by the Republican-controlled state Senate when it reconvenes in January.

"Andy O'Rourke has served the people of the state of New York and Westchester County with distinction for more than 32 years," Pataki said in a written statement. He was referring to O'Rourke's years on the Yonkers City Council and the Westchester County Board of Legislators.

"I am confident that he will continue to serve the people with great distinction in his new position of public service," Pataki added.



Andrew
O'Rourke

could not be reached for comment yesterday. But in a written statement, he thanked Pataki for the

O'Rourke, who hasn't practiced law since 1982, was rated "highly qualified," by the state Judicial Screening Committee.

The committee interviewed and approved O'Rourke on Tuesday.

O'Rourke

"opportunity to continue serving the people of New York."

The position pays \$113,000, about \$6,000 less than he now earns. It has a term that runs through March 31, 2006. As a Court of Claims judge, O'Rourke would hear lawsuits filed against the state.

The nomination comes six years after O'Rourke was nominated to the federal bench by President Bush. The nomination died in the Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate after Bush lost his re-election bid in 1992.

O'Rourke has also sought a statewide judgeship for the past

two decades. He was either rebuffed by party leaders or vined to seek re-election.

O'Rourke served on the York City Council from 1966 thru 1973, and the county legislature from 1974 through 1982. He the board's chairman from 1978 through 1982.

He was appointed county executive in 1983, after Alfred DelBello resigned to become lieutenant governor.

He won a special election that November and won full four-year terms in 1985, 1989 and 1993. O'Rourke lost the 1986 governor's race to Gov. Mario Cuomo.

Earlier this year, he declined to seek re-election.

O'Rourke has a law degree from Yonkers Law School and a master's degree from New York University School of Law. He is a captain in the Judge Advocate General's Office and a rear admiral in the New York Naval Militia.

"He's got solid credentials as a practicing attorney; he's served in the legislature and as county executive. He has the perfect credentials to serve as a member of the judiciary," said state Sen. Nicholas Spano, R-Yonkers. He said O'Rourke should gain swift confirmation in early January.

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