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New nominee to DC Appeals Court



HSU

President Obama on Wednesday nominated New York appellate lawyer Caitlin J. Halligan to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, widely viewed as the country's second most powerful court.

Halligan, 43, was New York state solicitor general under then-state attorney general Eliot Spitzer and led the appellate practice at the Weil, Gotshal and Manges law firm in New York from 2007 until January, when she became general counsel for the Manhattan district attorney's office.

A graduate of Princeton University and Georgetown University Law Center, Halligan was law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Stephen G. Breyer and Judge Patricia M. Wald of the D.C. circuit. She also was an associate at Wiley, Rein & Fielding in Washington.

The D.C. Circuit oversees many regulatory matters and disputes between the branches of government, such as appeals related to Guantanamo Bay detainees.

Four of nine current Supreme Court justices served on the District appeals court, including Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. — whose vacancy Halligan would fill — Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas.

Halligan is Obama's first nominee to the court, which has two openings, and which has been a partisan battleground for the Senate in recent years.

Spokespersons for Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.), the chairman and ranking Republican of the Senate Judiciary Committee, had no immediate comment about the nomination.

Obama also nominated Washington international trade specialist Jimmie V. Reyna to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Reyna, 47, is a partner at Williams Mullen, and served as national president of the Hispanic National Bar Association in 2006-07. He graduated from the University of Rochester and the University of New Mexico law school.

"At every step of their careers these individuals have performed with excellence and unwavering integrity," Obama said. "I am confident they will serve the American people with distinction."

-- Spencer S. Hsu

By Washington Post editors | September 30, 2010; 3:21 PM ET
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