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Kaye Confirmed as Chief Judge Amid Albany Senators' Praise

By SARAH LYALL

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ALBANY, March 17 — Judith S. Kaye was unanimously confirmed as Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals today after gliding through her confirmation hearing with almost no opposition.

As they took up her nomination on the floor of the full Senate, legislators from both parties clambered to lavish praise on the 54-year-old judge, who is the only woman ever to serve on the state's highest court.

One Senator called her "a woman for all seasons," another said she was "a special person" and a third called her "a charming lady." No Senator had a negative thing to say.

Questions Easily Parried

Judge Kaye, who is to take her oath of office next week, comes to her new position at a time of unusual turmoil. Her predecessor, Sol Wachtler, resigned in disgrace in November after being arrested on charges that he extorted money from a former lover. And the state's enormous court system, which the Chief Judge presides over, is overburdened and strained after years of tight budgets.

The formal vote in the Senate took place after a three-hour hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee in which Judge Kaye easily parried most questions having to do with judicial philosophy and issues like court financing and the budget.

She said she would not discuss how she would vote on any matter that

might come before the court, whether it had to do with the death penalty or with the state's obligation to finance social programs. And while saying that she had only sympathy for the mountains of paperwork and low salaries that judges and court workers contend with, the judge declined to give specific solutions.

One member of the public, a lawyer, came forward to complain about Judge Kaye's ruling on a case that he lost. But in general, the hearing was a formal exercise in mutual admiration. Sitting alone at a large table, Judge Kaye faced a dozen men from the Senate Judiciary Committee who seemed eager, if anything, to outdo one another in finding flowery superlatives with which to describe her.

"It's just delightful to be part of history here today," said Senator Joseph L. Galiber, a Bronx Democrat. "Judith Kaye — Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals. There's just something delightful about it."



David Jennings for The New York Times

Kaye Is Unanimously Confirmed as Chief Judge

Judith S. Kaye was unanimously confirmed as Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals yesterday after gliding through her confirmation hearing with almost no opposition. Judge Kaye, shown testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, is to take her oath of office next week. Page B6.