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NEWS RELEASE

March 9, 2017

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Idaho Clerk Elizabeth A. “Libby” Smith Named Ninth Circuit’s New Executive

SAN FRANCISCO — Elizabeth A. “Libby” Smith, currently the clerk of court for the federal courts in Idaho, has been selected as the new Circuit Executive of the Ninth Circuit. The appointment was announced today by Chief Judge Sidney R. Thomas of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

“We are extremely pleased to have Libby assume this important leadership position. She is well known and admired in the circuit and brings the kinds of experience and management skills needed to succeed in this very challenging job,” Judge Thomas said.

As circuit executive, Ms. Smith, 51, will report directly to the Chief Judge Thomas and serve as the secretary of the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, the governing body for federal courts in the western states and Pacific islands. She will lead the Office of the Circuit Executive, whose 38 employees provide a wide variety of services to all of the federal courts of the circuit. Ms. Smith is expected to assume her new duties next month.

“I am honored to have been selected to serve as the Ninth Circuit Executive. While in Idaho, I have been continuously amazed at the high level of service and support provided by the circuit executive’s office. I am truly excited to join such an outstanding team,” Ms. Smith said.

Ms. Smith succeeds Cathy A. Catterson, who retired February 28, 2017, after a federal court career spanning almost 40 years. Ms. Catterson was the clerk of court of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals from 1985 to 2007, and served in a dual role as circuit and court of appeals executive from 2007 until her retirement.

“I am excited for the Ninth Circuit that Libby has accepted the circuit executive position. She brings a special set of credentials and experience from the trial courts, both federal and state,” Ms. Catterson said. “I think she will be warmly received and welcomed by the circuit staff.”

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Ms. Smith currently manages a consolidated clerk's office that provides administrative services to both the U.S. District Court and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Idaho. She assumed the post in 2009 and is credited with bringing about innovative changes that improved court efficiency and cut costs. Ms. Smith is responsible for operations in the district headquarters in Boise and additional courthouses in Coeur d'Alene, Moscow and Pocatello. She provides direct services to six judges.

“Libby has done an amazing job for us and done so under very trying circumstances,” said Chief Judge B. Lynn Winmill of the District of Idaho, noting lean budget years along with the challenges posed by the state’s geography and the district’s lack of judicial officers. “We are a much stronger district due to Libby’s efforts. She will be missed.”

In addition to managerial experience, Ms. Smith has participated in court governance. At the national level, she chaired the District Clerks Advisory Council, which makes recommendations to the U.S. Judicial Conference and the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. At the regional level, she has served as an observer member of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Council, as co-chair of the circuit’s conferences of Chief District Judges and Chief Bankruptcy Judges, and as a member of a committee responsible for planning the educational elements of the annual circuit conference.

Ms. Smith’s contributions were recognized in 2016, when she was selected as one three recipients of the Administrative Office’s Director’s Award for Outstanding Leadership, the highest honor for judicial branch employees.

Prior to coming to the District of Idaho, Ms. Smith held administrative posts in both federal and state courts in her native Michigan. She served as the chief deputy clerk for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, from 2006 to 2009, and was the deputy court administrator and a divisional manager for the Michigan Sixth Judicial Circuit Court, from 1999 to 2006. Over the course of her career, she has also served as a judicial assistant, jury administrator and program analyst.

A native of Lansing, Michigan, Ms. Smith attended Walsh College, where she earned an M.S. in business information technology and B.S. in business administration. She and her husband, Ron, a federal employee who will soon be joining the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have two grown children.

The Office of the Circuit Executive works with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the federal trial and bankruptcy courts in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The office provides expertise in court management, education and training, human resources, legal matters, public information, space and facilities, and information technology.