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A first in Maine: Woman sworn in as federal district judge

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Ann Kim
Portland Press Herald, Maine
4:15 a.m. CDT, May 4, 2012

PORTLAND —

Nancy Torresen was sworn in Thursday as Maine's 17th U.S. District Court judge and the first woman to hold the position in the state.

Torresen said she didn't arrive at that point on her own. She thanked her family, including her mother, Frances Torresen, and her mother-in-law, Eleanor McCloskey, for all the times they made meals and picked up her children.

She acknowledged the suffragists who won the vote for women, those who fought in the 1960s to make gender discrimination illegal in the workplace, and the women in the early 1970s who were the first to enter law schools and the legal profession in significant numbers.

She said some of her role models at Thursday's ceremony were firsts in their fields.

In the courtroom were Sandra Lynch, the first woman to be chief judge of the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals; Caroline Glassman, the first woman to serve on the Maine Supreme Judicial Court; Magistrate Judge Margaret Kravchuk, the first federal judge in Maine;

former U.S. Attorney Paula Silsby, the first woman to hold the job in the state; and Linda Jacobson, the first female clerk of court.

"I salute you, all you women who have gone before me," Torresen said. "I truly stand on your shoulders and I hope that my shoulders will support the weight of the women who follow in my footsteps."

Torresen, a former assistant U.S. attorney, was confirmed unanimously by the Senate in October. She replaces Judge D. Brock Hornby, who has moved to senior status.

During the investiture ceremony, Chief District Judge John Woodcock administered the oath. Torresen's mother and her husband, former U.S. Attorney Jay McCloskey, assisted

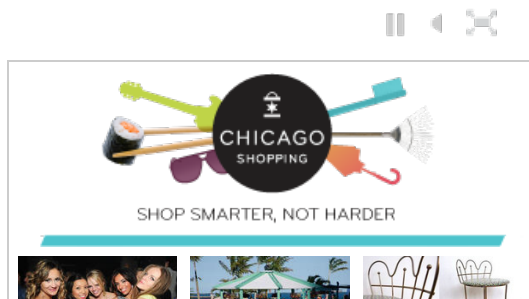
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her in the ceremonial donning of her robe.

Political and judicial luminaries were well represented at the event at the Edward T. Gignoux U.S. Courthouse. The speakers included former Sen. George Mitchell, the four members of Maine's congressional delegation, Circuit Judge Kermit Lipez, Woodcock and Hornby.

Mitchell said Torresen's skills, along with her fair and reasoned approach, make her uniquely qualified for the federal bench.

"But beyond the personal importance of this day for her and her family and for this district is a public meaning of much larger significance," he said. "The rule of law will prevail and protect democracy only if it is administered fairly by women and men of integrity, honesty and empathy."

The four members of Maine's congressional delegation also spoke. Democratic U.S. Reps. Mike Michaud and Chellie Pingree had recommended Torresen to the post. Republican Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins strongly supported Torresen's nomination in the Senate.

As an assistant U.S. attorney, Torresen worked on both criminal and civil matters. When her husband was serving as U.S. attorney, she was assigned to the Maine Attorney General's Office, where she handled homicide appeals.

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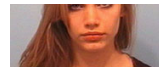
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