

Leitess named new Anne Arundel state's attorney

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Longtime Anne Arundel County prosecutor Anne Colt Leitess has been tapped to serve as state's attorney.

The decision, made by the county's dozen Circuit Court judges, was announced Thursday afternoon.

Leitess, 49, of Crownsville, will serve in the position until the next general election in November 2014.

"I'm just very excited the judges would place their trust in me for this job," she said. "It's a very serious job, very important, and I think being a career prosecutor has led me to this."

Leitess has been an assistant state's attorney in the county for 23 years and has been the office's trial team leader on violent crimes since 2007, supervising attorneys and four support staff.

She has prosecuted a death penalty trial, hundreds of serious felony cases, and at least a dozen homicides. She recently secured two convictions in the murder of a Glen Burnie dentist, netting a life sentence without parole for the killer and 40 years for an accomplice.

She is a member of the Maryland State's Attorney's Violent Crime Legislative Committee and is the secretary for the Anne Arundel County Bar Association. She has also served as the attorney adviser for the mock trial team at Old Mill High School since 2005.

Leitess beat out eight others vying to replace longtime State's Attorney Frank Weathersbee, including colleagues Deputy State's Attorney Thomas Fleckenstein and Assistant State's Attorney Kathleen Rogers.

Weathersbee would not comment on the judges' selection. But Leitess said she has gotten a lot of positive feedback from the office.

"There are a lot of qualified candidates," she said. "Mr. Fleckenstein and Ms. Rogers are highly qualified and this should take nothing away from them ... It's who is best fit for the job, and I'm glad the court thought I was."

Fleckenstein and Rogers had good wishes for their colleague.

"While I am certainly disappointed, I respect the judges' decision, congratulate Mrs. Leitess and wish her good luck," Fleckenstein said.

"I think Anne is an excellent choice, she is a career prosecutor and will serve the citizens of Anne Arundel County well," Rogers said.

Leitess received the news just before 2 p.m. but was told not to tell anyone until all the candidates were notified.

She was calling a case in county Circuit Court shortly after that when Judge Paul A. Hackner made the announcement to a packed courtroom.

“Everyone broke into applause, so that was very exciting,” she said. “He made the announcement in front of 50 people, and it’s hard to speak after that.”

She was not sure when she would be sworn in, but assumed it would be Wednesday, the day after Weathersbee officially retires.

Leitess, who makes \$90,011 as an assistant state’s attorney, will be paid what Weathersbee made as state’s attorney — \$160,730, according to the county’s Personnel Office.

Weathersbee announced his retirement May 15. He will be joining the Maryland State Parole Commission. Weathersbee endorsed Fleckenstein, his second-in-command, to follow him into the office.

The move prompted criticism from Anne Arundel County Republicans, who accused the longtime state’s attorney of stepping down before his term was over in order to give Fleckenstein a leg up in running for the office in 2014.

Weathersbee said it was “ludicrous” to suggest he could tell the judges of the Circuit Court what to do.