

Judge Hess to step down

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Don't call Circuit Judge **Glenn Hess'** resignation a retirement.

"It's time for a change," **Hess** said Wednesday. "I'm not going to retire. I'm entirely too active for retirement."

Hess submitted his resignation letter to Gov. Charlie Crist on Wednesday, saying he will end 13 years on the bench at midnight March 1. **Hess** was re-elected without opposition in 2006, and his six-year term would have expired in 2012.

He called his years in office "the most fulfilling of my career" and said the education he received as a judge was something that could not be duplicated "in the classroom or in the practice of law."

"For this," **Hess** wrote, "I will always be grateful."

He said he has loose ends to tie up and a docket to get in order before stepping down. He asked Crist to activate a local search committee to screen applicants for his replacement. The Judicial Nominating Commission will send up to three nominees to Crist for the appointment of a new judge.

Hess wouldn't discuss his plans for after March 1.

"I can't talk about that with you today," he repeated, when asked about rumors that he would run for state attorney this year.

He said he is restricted by judicial ethics from discussing certain things while in office.

"Judges have special restrictions both when they seek office and when they're in office," **Hess** said. Discussing himself as a possible political candidate for another office "would come under those special restrictions."

He said he has had the unique opportunity to watch the litigation process at work from the bench in the 14th judicial circuit. He said more lawyers would benefit by watching proceedings in which they are not directly involved.

"By seeing all this, I've been able to learn so much more than I ever could have by sitting in a law office and pushing papers," Hess said. "Most lawyers would consider judicial office as a capstone to their career. I've had an opportunity that most lawyers will not have, but I've always looked for new things. I'm ready to step down."

He smiled when asked if his family was behind him.

"I've been blessed with a wife who has always supported me in everything that I have ever undertaken," Hess said.

Tim Warner, former Judicial Nominating Commission chair and current member, said it usually takes about 60 days to get a replacement for a resigning judge. Once the governor calls the commission together, the members review applications and interview the applicants to send up a short list of three nominees.

The governor's general counsel interviews the nominees and usually the governor makes a selection from that group. The governor does have the power to reject the nominees, but that is rarely done.

"We try to move pretty quickly once the governor calls us together," Warner said