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Governor Christie Names Robert W. Johnson Acting Cape May County Prosecutor

Friday, September 29, 2017

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Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie and Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino today announced the appointment of Robert W. Johnson as Acting Cape May County Prosecutor.

Johnson was sworn into office this morning. He replaces Prosecutor Robert L. Taylor, who served as Cape May County Prosecutor since Oct. 1, 2004 and retired today. Johnson has served as First Assistant Cape May County Prosecutor since 2012.

"With a quarter century of experience in the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, prosecuting high-profile cases and serving in top supervisory roles, Rob Johnson will be an excellent leader for the office," said Governor Chris Christie. "We thank Robert Taylor for his 13 years of distinguished leadership as county prosecutor, and we know that Acting Prosecutor Johnson will continue to serve justice and the interests of the people of Cape May County with great skill and dedication."

"Rob Johnson is a career prosecutor with an outstanding track record of leadership who also happens to be a lifelong resident of Cape May County," said Attorney General Porrino. "I can think of no one better qualified or more motivated to look out for the safety and security of Cape May County residents as their top prosecutor and chief law enforcement officer."

"I am extremely honored to be given the opportunity to serve as Acting County Prosecutor for the County of Cape May," said Acting Prosecutor Johnson. "I believe my 25 years of experience as an Assistant Prosecutor has made me uniquely qualified to do this job well. I would like to thank Prosecutor Taylor for his hard work and dedication to this office for the last 13 years. Due to his efforts, I take over an office that has a highly trained and experienced staff that I'm sure will continue to handle the daily administration of Criminal Justice in a fair and professional manner."

Acting Prosecutor Johnson is a lifelong resident of Cape May County. He graduated from Wildwood High School, and is a graduate of Montclair State College, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science in 1987. He subsequently attended the University of Dayton, where he received his Juris Doctor Law Degree in 1991. In 1992, Johnson was hired as an Assistant Prosecutor with the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office. He served as the Domestic Violence Prosecutor from 1992 to 1994. Thereafter, he served in a succession of supervisory and leadership positions. He was assigned as the Supervising Assistant Prosecutor for the Cape May County Drug Task Force from 1994 to 2001. In 2001, he was promoted to Chief Assistant Prosecutor in charge of the trial section of the office.

In 2012, Johnson was promoted to First Assistant Prosecutor, a position that he has held for the last five years. During his tenure in the Cape May Prosecutor's Office, Johnson has handled many of the office's homicide prosecutions. He was the trial prosecutor in the case of State v. Jessie Watkins. The Watkins matter was a cold-case homicide investigation that went unsolved for 19 years. In 2007, the defendant, Jessie Watkins, was convicted of killing his cousin Craig White. Watkins is currently serving a 45-year state prison sentence for the murder conviction. Additionally, in 2006, Johnson tried and convicted Gerald Daniels of the killing of Wallace Savitz, who was stabbed 157 times during his murder. Daniels is currently serving a life sentence for his murder conviction. In 2013, Johnson tried and convicted Alberto Martinez for the murder of Vincent DeSario. Martinez is currently serving a 50-year state prison sentence.

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Johnson appeared before the New Jersey Supreme Court in the matter of State v Wade, 169 N.J. 302 (2001). In Wade, Johnson successfully argued to the New Jersey Supreme Court that the crime of vehicular homicide should receive the same mandatory sentences as other forms of homicide, which require that the No Early Release Act (NERA) be applied to the defendant's sentence. In addition to his new administrative responsibilities as head of the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office, Acting Prosecutor Johnson is currently the assigned prosecutor in three active homicide prosecutions.

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