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Vilsack appoints first woman to District 1B judgeship

By CHARLOTTE EBY, Courier Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES --- Gov. Tom Vilsack has appointed the first woman to the bench in the judicial district that includes Black Hawk County.

Kellyann M. Lekar was chosen Friday for an open district judgeship in Judicial District 1B.

Lekar, 37, was one of 15 lawyers who applied for the position. The other finalist for the job was lawyer Beth Hansen of Cedar Falls.

Vilsack praised Lekar's legal work in announcing her appointment.

"Kellyann Lekar shows an impressive knowledge of the law, with extensive experience in representing clients from a wide variety of forums, and is eminently qualified to be a district court judge. I believe she will be a fair and responsible judge who will serve the first district well," Vilsack said.

Lekar has been a lawyer at Roberts, Stevens and Lekar in Waterloo for the last eight years and became a full partner in 2000. Her practice has focused primarily on family and person injury law.

"In a town like Waterloo-Cedar Falls, you have to be a bit of a generalist. You have to do a little bit of everything," Lekar said.

Lekar will assume her job on the bench in the next 30 days. She replaces District Judge James L. Beeghly, who retired last year.

Lekar, who was vacationing when the announcement was made, said she was honored to be chosen.

"Certainly, there were a number of qualified candidates," Lekar said.

Lekar earned her law degree from the University of Iowa College of Law and received her undergraduate degree in psychology from Iowa State University.

Judicial District 1B serves Black Hawk, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Fayette, Grundy and Howard counties.