Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks Regarding his Supreme Court Judge Appointment

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Wednesday, March 14, 2001

Good afternoon, and thank you for joining me today. I am delighted today to announce my first appointment to the Texas Supreme Court and introduce you to Wallace Bernard Jefferson of San Antonio. It is a great honor and responsibility to make this appointment. But I am especially pleased to be able to nominate an individual with the impeccable character and legal credentials that Wallace Jefferson has. My appointment today signifies an important lesson for all our young people: Regardless of the color of one’s skin, the sound of one’s last name, or the depth of one’s financial resources, the promise of tomorrow awaits every individual of character and vision, of virtue and resolve.

A native Texan, Wallace is one of six children born to William Douglas Jefferson, a retired major in the United States Air Force, and Joyce Virginia Jefferson, a retired administrative assistant with Southwest Research Foundation. A graduate of John Jay High School in San Antonio, Wallace received a bachelor of arts degree from Michigan State University in 1985 and a law degree from the University of Texas in 1988. He has distinguished himself as a civil appellate lawyer, arguing before the United States Supreme Court and the Texas Supreme Court. He serves on the Texas Commission on Judicial Conduct and is active in numerous legal and civic organizations.

Earlier this year, in my state-of-the state address, I remarked: From humble beginnings often come the most vivid of dreams. Our commitment, our mission, must be to advance those dreams, to say to the next generation, “we don’t care where you come from, but where you are going.” A few years back, Wallace’s father traced the humble beginnings of the Jefferson family. During his research he discovered the death notice for Wallace’s great-great-great grandfather, Shedrick Willis. Shedrick Willis had died in 1903 at the age of 86. Wallace was initially surprised to learn that Shedrick Willis had served on the Waco City Council during the brief period of Reconstruction in Texas. It gave him fleeting hope that his forebears had, perhaps, escaped the plight to which the vast majority of Shedrick Willis’ peers had been subjected. But there — between the sentences of the obituary reporting the death and place of burial — was the notation that Shedrick Willis had belonged to Judge N.W. Battle before the war. Shedrick Willis had been a slave — property to be bought and sold at auctions on the courthouse steps. More than 100 years later, his great-great-great grandson will proudly walk up the courthouse steps into the highest court in our state, an equal among nine peers. Truly Shedrick Willis would be proud.

Wallace Jefferson is a rising star in Texas. He will bring to the court an exceptional background in civil and appellate law and a faithful adherence to the United States and Texas Constitutions. He will be a fair, balanced and conservative judge who will strictly interpret our laws and Constitution in the best interest of Texas.
It is my great honor to introduce this brilliant legal mind to the people of Texas, please welcome the man who will be the newest member of the Supreme Court, Wallace Jefferson.