

19th JUDICIAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY, PARISH OF EAST BATON ROUGE
ORGANIZATIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

December 5, 2014

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating First Assistant Prem Burns on her retirement on January 12, 2015, after 40 years of public service as an exceptional lawyer, prosecutor, and trial litigator. During the past 7 years, while at the pinnacle of her career, Prem has served our office not only as First Assistant and Chief of Litigation but also as a trial litigator of major cases, grand jury legal advisor, asset forfeiture counsel, and police incident prosecutor. During her 34 1/2 years with this office and another 2 1/2 years with the Calcasieu District Attorney, she has improved the criminal justice system by working to establish primary case law for “principals” in the case of State v. Velez, primary case law for the admissibility of DNA in capital and post-conviction litigation, and primary case law for mental retardation in capital cases.

When Prem first entered the field of law as a brand new Legal Aid lawyer in 1974, women in the legal profession were rare and women prosecutors were non-existent. Beginning with our office in Family Law, she quickly became the first woman felony prosecutor in East Baton Rouge parish, the first woman criminal section chief, and the first woman First Assistant. Through her own dedication, excellence, and perseverance she shattered outdated norms, blazed a path for others to follow, was recognized many times as a leading figure in our community, through her appointment as Chief of Special Prosecutions under District Attorney Doug Moreau, assistant U.S. attorney under U.S. Attorney Stan Bardwell, her own nomination as the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, and as a candidate for District Judge in Baton Rouge. Just this year, she was recognized by the Director of the FBI as a national leader in law enforcement.

Some of her accomplishments include:

- Prosecuting in excess of one hundred felony jury trials
- Prosecuting the first capital prosecutions in East Baton Rouge since the U.S. Supreme suspended the death penalty in 1976 and obtaining six death sentences
- Conducting more than 25 oral arguments before the First and Third Circuit Courts of Appeal and the Louisiana Supreme Court
- Training numerous lawyers in her profession at LSU as an adjunct professor and trial advocacy faculty member
- Being named by Parade Magazine as one of few “Women Who Could be America’s Toughest Prosecutors”
- Being named by the Baton Rouge Business Report as one of the most influential Women in Business
- Being recognized in literature and film for her significant prosecutions in the Kings of Cocaine, The Man Who Made it Snow, Running for My Life, Dismembered, Killer Profile, Murder Cajun Style, The Devil in the Details, and Twisted.

As we all know, Prem's many responsibilities as First Assistant, Chief of Litigation, grand jury legal advisor, asset forfeiture counsel, and police incident prosecutor will be very challenging for our office to fill. To ensure a smooth transition, I am announcing today the appointment of Tracey Barbera as First Assistant and Dana Cummings as Chief of Litigation, both of these appointments to become effective with my new term of office commencing on January 12, 2015.

I ask everyone in the office to assist Prem, Tracey, and Dana with their transitions so that the public continues to be well served. Prem has graciously assured me that she will continue to work with our office as Special Counsel on behalf of her victims in her remaining capital post-conviction cases.

Congratulations Prem on your retirement and the outstanding accomplishments of your 40 years as a lawyer and an exceptional 39 years as a prosecutor!

Congratulations and thank you to Tracey and Dana for accepting their new and challenging positions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "HCC", located at the bottom left of the page.