

# **‘Ten Commandments Judge’ goes to Alabama high court**

Alabama’s “Ten Commandments judge,” who became a hero for social conservatives when he was sued for displaying a copy of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom, was elected as the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court by an overwhelming margin on Nov. 7. Judge Roy Moore defeated Civil Appeals Court Judge Sharon Yates, a Democrat.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued Moore in 1995 for hanging a hand-carved copy of the 10 biblical laws in his courtroom in Gadsden, Ala., in Etowah County. The suit also objected to the county’s practice of starting jury sessions with Christian prayer. The case ended largely unresolved due to legal technicalities, but the Ten Commandments stayed on Moore’s courtroom wall.

Moore has said he will take the carving with him to Alabama’s capital, Montgomery. He has not said yet whether it will be on his wall in the state’s high-court building.

Rejecting the idea that he might be a centrist, Moore appeared to revel in his role of “keeper” of the Ten Commandments. Often on the campaign trail he would speak in churches and before religious groups, defending both his decision to display the Commandments as well as his call to return to traditional moral values. Moore is credited with swaying a clean Republican sweep of the races for the Alabama Supreme Court.

Perry Hooper Sr., whose retirement from the bench left the chief justice's seat open, said he keeps two of the Commandments on his desk, but adds, "That's just for Perry Hooper." He noted that the U.S. Supreme Court building contains a painting of Moses holding tablets that represent the Ten Commandments and said there "may be some precedent" for hanging Moore's carving in the Alabama courtroom.

Hooper suggested that the state's nine justices perhaps could agree to the display or agree on a compromise.

"I'm going to do all I can to help because I want Judge Moore to be a good chief justice. I think he will be," Hooper said. Moore was sworn in on Jan. 16.

—David Lamb in Birmingham, Ala.