

First Black, Openly Gay Man Confirmed as US Federal Judge

The United States' first black, openly gay male judge was appointed to the federal bench on Tuesday in a unanimous confirmation decision by the U.S. Senate.

Darrin P. Gayles, appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, one of the nation's busiest federal benches, has served as a Miami-Dade Circuit Court judge since 2011. He was born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1966 and earned a law degree from the George Washington University Law School.

The Senate also confirmed Judge Staci Michelle Yandle, an openly gay African-American woman, to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois. She is the federal bench's second openly lesbian black woman.

President Barack Obama nominated Gayles for the position in February, after a previous openly gay black nominee from Miami was not confirmed to the federal bench last year.

Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge William L. Thomas was blocked by Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, a conservative Republican. A spokeswoman for Rubio said he withdrew his support due to concerns over sentencing in a murder and drunk driving case.

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