

Roberts Taps Justice Vet to Be Top Aide

By MATT APUZZO
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WASHINGTON -- Chief Justice John Roberts named a veteran government lawyer and former Justice Department colleague as his top aide Monday.

Jeffrey P. Minear has worked in the solicitor general's office since 1985, including four years alongside Roberts. They collaborated on several cases, including a 1991 brief that abortion-rights groups used last year to criticize Roberts' nomination.

They also worked together on the Microsoft antitrust case, when Minear represented the federal government and Roberts represented several states in their fight with the software company.

Minear, the senior litigation counsel in the solicitor general's office, is one of the nation's most accomplished Supreme Court attorneys. He has argued 56 cases before the high court.

"Minear is a major Supreme Court figure, which certainly suggests the chief has aspirations to make this a major position," said Richard Lazarus, a Georgetown University professor who worked in the solicitor general's office for four years.

Ken Starr, who oversaw Minear and Roberts when he was solicitor general, said Monday, "At a time when the country and the legal community are polarized, he will provide nonpartisan expertise to the chief justice."

Minear is "not a person who would bring an agenda to the chief justice's chambers," said Starr, the former White House independent counsel who is now dean of Pepperdine University Law School in California. "He'll be a great public servant, as he has for the last 20 years."

In his new job, Minear will serve as Roberts' chief of staff, helping run the court and monitor judicial issues. He will assist the chief justice on such issues such as court reform but he won't help craft court opinions.

"I have worked with (and against) Jeff over nearly two decades and during that time I have seen firsthand his strong commitment to the Supreme Court as an institution and his respect for its role in our system of government," Roberts said in a prepared statement.

Minear will start work Sept. 11. He will replace Sally M. Rider, who is becoming the director of the William H. Rehnquist Center on the Constitutional Structures of Government at the University of Arizona.

Roberts and Minear were among seven government attorneys representing President George H.W. Bush's administration who wrote a 1991 brief that said *Roe v. Wade* was "wrongly and unfortunately decided."

Lazarus, who has known Minear for decades, said he is not political. "He's filed a lot of liberal positions and a lot of conservative positions," Lazarus said. "You're not going to find any ideological trends."

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