

**James E. Graves, Jr.**  
**United States Circuit Judge**  
**United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit**

Judge James E. Graves, Jr. was nominated by President Barack Obama on June 10, 2010, to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. His nomination was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 14, 2011. Upon nominating Judge Graves, President Obama said, “Throughout his career James E. Graves has shown unwavering integrity and an outstanding commitment to public service.”

Judge Graves was born in Clinton, Mississippi. He earned his B.A. in sociology at Millsaps College. He worked in Mississippi’s Department of Public Welfare for two years before beginning law school. He then earned his law degree, as well as a master’s degree in public administration at Syracuse University.

Upon graduation from law school, Judge Graves worked as a staff attorney with Central Mississippi Legal Services. He engaged in private practice in Jackson for three years before joining the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General as a Special Assistant Attorney General in the Health Law Division, and later served as head of the Human Services Division. He then joined the Mississippi Department of Human Services where he served as Director of the Division of Child Support Enforcement.

In 1991, Judge Graves was appointed as a circuit judge in Hinds County, where he served for ten years. In 2001, he was appointed to the Mississippi Supreme Court. He was elected to continue on the court in 2004. He served as a presiding justice from 2009 until 2011, when he joined the Fifth Circuit.

Judge Graves has served as an adjunct professor at Jackson State University, Millsaps College, and Tougaloo College. He taught courses in civil rights and media law as well as the sociology of law. He has also been a Teaching Team Member of the Harvard Law School’s Trial Advocacy Workshop.

As the first African American from Mississippi to serve on the Fifth Circuit, Judge Graves was awarded the Mississippi Trailblazer of the Decade award—an award that recognizes Mississippians who have shown a commitment to racial, cultural, and gender diversity and who have presented Mississippi in a positive light.

Judge Graves was awarded the 2011 FBI Director’s Community Leadership Award in recognition of his deep commitment to working with Mississippi youth. Other organizations have acknowledged Judge Graves’ work with youth as well. In 2009, he was awarded the Maxwell Public Administration Award by Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, which recognizes alumni for exceptional work in public service. Millsaps College awarded him the Livesay Award in 2004 for his service to Millsaps College and the larger community. He was awarded the Humanized Education Award in 2002 by the Mississippi Association of Educators. He was Jackson Public School District’s 2001 Parent of the Year and the First Alternate for Mississippi’s Parent of the Year Award for 2001. In 1991, he was named Champion Adopter by the Lake Elementary School’s Boys for a Brighter Tomorrow Program in honor of his mentoring.

Judge Graves has three sons, all of whom are attorneys. He and his wife, Dr. Bettye Ramsey Graves, are active members of New Heights Seventh Day Adventist Church in Jackson, Mississippi.