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Porter judge appointed to appeals court

VU grad fills vacant seat on the Indiana Court of Appeals

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Gov. Eric Holcomb appointed a Porter County judge Wednesday to a vacant seat on the Indiana Court of Appeals.

The Republican chief executive selected Porter Circuit Judge Mary DeBoer to join the state's 15-judge appellate court, whose three-judge panels annually rule on more than 2,000 appeals of criminal and civil trial court decisions from all 92 Indiana counties.

"Judge DeBoer is a person of immense integrity, intellect and energy. I'm proud to appoint her to the Court of Appeals," Holcomb said.

"Judge DeBoer's commitment to the law and justice will serve her fellow Hoosiers with distinction as she joins the second

highest bench in Indiana."

DeBoer was appointed judge of the Porter Circuit Court by Holcomb in 2019 following the retirement of Judge Mary Harper. Porter County voters elected DeBoer, a Republican, to a six-year term on the county bench in 2020.

She said following the governor's office ceremony certifying her appointment to the Court of Appeals that she is "eternally grateful that the people of Porter County elected me to be their circuit court judge."

"I feel like I have hit my stride both in the courtroom and in my community. I can't wait to work with my colleagues on the Court of Appeals and to discover the many ways I can contribute to the court as well as to the entire state of Indiana," DeBoer said.

The judge currently oversees the juvenile justice center in Porter County,



PROVIDED

Porter Circuit Judge Mary DeBoer speaks Wednesday in the governor's office at the Statehouse in Indianapolis after she was appointed to the Indiana Court of Appeals by Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb, right.

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SOUTHLAKE MALL TURNS 50



JOSEPH S. PETE, THE TIMES

Hobart Mayor Josh Huddlestun speaks at the 50th anniversary ceremony of the Southlake Mall.

Shopping center celebrated as community hub and 'a wonderful way to spend the day'

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For the past half century, people have made countless memories at the Southlake Mall in Hobart.

People fondly remember making a wish while throwing coins into the fountain at the center court, sipping Orange Julius, playing pinball at the Aladdin's Castle arcade, trying to persuade their parents to get them something good at KB Toys or going to see Santa Claus.

They recall browsing records at Camelot Music, sipping coffee at Borders, sampling the bourbon chicken at Maki of Japan or snarfing down Schoop's smashburgers or Chuck Wheeler's Vienna Beef hot dogs.

The super-regional mall at U.S. 30 and Mississippi Street just off the Interstate 65 interchange, the second largest mall in Indiana, celebrated its 50th anniversary Wednesday. The Region's largest

and most popular mall anchors a sprawling commercial trade area that stretches along U.S. 30 in Hobart and Merrillville, drawing shoppers, diners and workers from across Northwest Indiana.

"Over the past five decades, Southlake Mall has become more than just a shopping destination. It is a community hub, a place where business thrive and families

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US ECONOMY

Fed cuts interest rates a half point

Officials believe their part of the fight against inflation is concluded

CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve cut its benchmark interest rate Wednesday by an unusually large half-point, a dramatic shift after more than two years of high rates that helped tame inflation but also made borrowing painfully expensive for American consumers.

The rate cut, the Fed's first in more than four years, reflects its new focus on bolstering the job market, which has shown clear signs of slowing. Coming just weeks before the presidential election, the Fed's move also has the potential to scramble the economic landscape just as Americans prepare to vote.

The central bank's action lowered its key rate to roughly 4.8%, down from a two-decade high of 5.3%, where it had stood for 14 months as it struggled to curb the worst inflation streak in four decades. Inflation has tumbled from a peak of 9.1% in mid-2022 to a three-year low of 2.5% in August, not far above the Fed's 2% target.

The Fed's policymakers also signaled that they expect to cut their key rate by an additional half-point in their final two meetings this year, in November and December. And they envision four more rate cuts in 2025 and two in 2026.

In a statement and in a news conference with Chair Jerome Powell, the Fed came closer than it has before to declaring victory over inflation.

"We know it is time to recalibrate our (interest rate) policy to something that's more appropriate given the progress on inflation," Powell said. "We're not saying, 'mission accomplished' ...

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Weather
Mostly sunny, very warm
High 92 • Low 58
FORECAST • **A4**

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Mall

From A1

gather,” Southlake Mall Marketing and Business Development Manager Kristyn Filetti said. “We owe the success to the dedication of our retailers, our business partners and most importantly our loyal shoppers. As we celebrate this occasion, we also look forward to the exciting future ahead as we continue to evolve for the next generation.”

Richard E. Jacobs, the commercial real estate developer who owned of then-Cleveland Indians Major League Baseball team, broke ground on the two-story Southlake Mall in 1973. It opened on Sept. 18, 1974 with 936,000 square feet and 120 stores, including the anchors JC Penney and Sears.

Senior General Manager Peter Karonis said the mall has reached a monumental milestone.

“Fifty years ago today, the Southlake Mall first welcomed the community,” he said. “Since then, it has evolved into so much more than a group of shops. It has become a cherished gathering place where memories are created, offering entrepreneurs (a chance) to grow and contribute to the

vibrant spirit of our community. Today, we celebrate the rich history of Southlake Mall. We started as a simple hub for shopping and a gathering place for the community. It has grown into something remarkable over the past 50 years.”

Northwest Indiana is littered with shuttered malls like the Century Mall in Merrillville, the Marquette Mall in Michigan City or Woodmar Mall in Hammond. Some malls, like The Village in Gary, are a faint shadow of what they were in their heyday. But the Southlake Mall has remained relevant by adjusting with the times, Karonis said.

“From the early days, the Southlake Mall has remained a leader in retail, continuously evolving with the times, embracing trends, technology and the ever changing needs of the community and shopper while upholding its core values of excellent service, diverse options and strong community ties,” he said. “When the first family strolled through these halls, there was the excitement of something new.”

Southlake Mall added L.S. Ayers in 1978, Kohl’s in 1993 and a food court in 1999.

“It’s become a cherished staple,” he said. “Southlake Mall has become a part of

countless family traditions with many of you having made memories as small children and now sharing those same experiences with your families.”

Southlake Mall was acquired by Sydney, Australia-based Westfield in 2002 and rebranded as the Westfield Shoppingtown Southlake Mall until it was purchased by the Connecticut-based Starwood Capital Group in 2013. It’s now run by the California-based Pacific Retail Capital Partners.

In Indiana, only the Castleton Square Mall in Indianapolis is larger. The Southlake Mall stretches over 1.36 million square feet and is home to more than 160 retailers, including Books-a-Million, Spencer’s Gifts, Clark Street Sports, Miniso, Akira, rue21, Victoria’s Secret and Build-A-Bear.

“While we honor our history, we are committed to honoring our real estate for the next generation and continuing to serve the community for the next 50 years and beyond,” he said. JCPenney has been a fixture at the two-story enclosed mall from the start.

“JCPenney began with the Golden Rule Store based on the golden rule of treating others as you would want to be treated in the downtown of Kemmerer,

Wyoming in 1902,” General Manager Jodi Ringler said. “Seventy-two years later, as America was building shopping malls across the country, JCPenney formed a partnership with the Southlake Mall that is still going strong today. We intend to be here for another 50 years.”

The mall has lost anchor department stores like Sears and Carson Pirie Scott to bankruptcy in recent years, but has continued to add stores even as many brick-and-mortar chains have gone out of business in the face of e-commerce competition over the last decade or so.

A major redevelopment project added Macy’s, an AMC multiplex and Buffalo Wild Wings in 2006. People camped out in tents outside when the first Chick-fil-A to come to Northwest Indiana in 2011. Fine dining arrived the following year when Cooper’s Hawk Winery & Restaurant landed in 2012. The mall has kept adding hip stores like H&M and Forever 21.

The Southlake Mall celebrated the 50th anniversary with a time capsule that included a newspaper, business cards, a Pacific Retail cap, a South Shore Convention and Visitor Bureau brochure, a Hobart Cham-

ber of Commerce directory, an envelope with a 69-cent stamp and a Rubik’s Cube that was made in 1974. The goal was to create a snapshot of the moment in time the Southlake Mall occupies today.

“Every time I get the opportunity to talk about Southlake Mall everyone talks about some shared memory like the fountains where they got to throw the coins in,” Hobart Mayor Josh Huddlestun said. “My memories are a little different. I remember as a kid walking out of this place crying because I didn’t get what I wanted from KB Toys. Fifty years is a long time for any business to survive. I’ve got to give Peter and his team credit for constantly evolving as the times evolve.”

The mall has long been a major economic driver and is vital to the city’s future plans, Huddlestun said.

“We understand as a community and as a city what the mall means to our U.S. 30 corridor and the success we hope to have with the U.S. 30 corridor in the future,” he said. “We as a community are making a commitment to the U.S. 30 corridor. We understand the mall is a hub that draws people and is the anchor that holds us in place and

allows us to thrive.”

The mall has put out signage celebrating the 50th anniversary and added an exhibit detailing the mall’s history on the second floor by the old Carson Pirie Scott entrance. It launched a Memories Project so the public can share photos and memories on its website that will be displayed online and on an anniversary display in the food court.

“I had the opportunity to meet Peter in January. I came in and he was as excited about the future of the mall as we were,” Huddlestun said. “I’m excited for 50 years. I can’t wait to continue to share memories with my kids. Families can share the memories seeing Santa here and all the amazing things they’re doing. Kudos to you guys on 50 years and the dedication of your team. We’re going to be behind you as a city and the whole U.S. 30 corridor. Here’s to 50 years and 50 more.”

The Southlake Mall plans to give a \$50 gift card every month to someone who shares their memories.

“This milestone is a testament to our amazing community,” Filetti said. “As we look back on the past five decades, we are proud of the journey and the countless memories created here.”

Judge

From A1

manages three problem-solving courts, and leads the alternative dispute resolution program and the local domestic violence committee, in addition to presiding over criminal and civil trials on a regular basis.

“(These duties have) provided me with a platform where I acquired a varied and deep knowledge of many areas of the law and administration which will serve me well on the appellate court,” DeBoer said.

The Valparaiso University Law School graduate also previously

worked as a Porter Superior Court magistrate, a deputy prosecutor in Porter and Starke counties, and an associate attorney in private practice.

In July, the seven-member Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission, led by Chief Justice Loretta Rush, recommended DeBoer to the governor for the Court of Appeals vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Patricia Riley, a Rensselaer native, after 30 years on the Court of Appeals.

The other candidates recommended to Holcomb out of eight applicants for the vacancy were Lake Superior Judge Stephen Scheele and St. Joseph Superior Court Judge Stephanie Steele.

DeBoer said the extensive application and vetting process for the Court of Appeals “has been a labor of love for me for the past year.”

“I am deeply honored to have been selected by Governor Holcomb for this appellate judgeship. With Judge Riley’s retirement, I have big shoes to fill. I will continue to infuse my energy and enthusiasm into all I do in Indianapolis and throughout the state,” DeBoer said.

A date for DeBoer’s swearing-in and robing ceremony at the Indiana Court of Appeals has not yet been set.

Holcomb will appoint DeBoer’s successor at the Porter Circuit

Court in coming months.

The governor also will have the opportunity to select one more Court of Appeals judge before his second and final term as Indiana’s chief executive ends Jan. 13, 2025.

The Indiana Judicial Nominating Commission currently is considering a total of seven applicants to replace Appeals Judge Terry Crone, a South Bend native, following his retirement.

Six of the seven also applied for the Riley vacancy, including Lake Superior Judge Gina Jones, of Crown Point; attorney Anna Mandula, of Crown Point; LaPorte Superior Judge Jaime Oss, of LaPorte; attorney Elizabeth Underwood, of Fort Wayne; as well

as Scheele and Steele.

Allen Superior Judge Andrew Williams is the final Court of Appeals applicant.

The nominating commission is slated to interview the candidates in October and then recommend three to Holcomb, who will have 60 days to weigh which potential judge to put on the Court of Appeals for an initial two-year term.

Hoosier voters will decide at a subsequent general election whether DeBoer and the other new judge should be retained on the appellate bench for another 10 years.

— Times staff writer Bob Kasarda contributed to this report.

Fed

From A1

but I have to say, though, we’re encouraged by the progress that we have made.

“The U.S. economy is in a good place,” he added, “and our decision today is designed to keep it there.”

Central banks around the world dramatically increased borrowing costs from near zero during the COVID-19 pandemic when prices started to shoot up, first as a result of supply chain issues and then because of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up energy costs. As inflation rates fell from multi-decade highs, they started cutting interest rates.

Though the U.S. central bank now believes inflation is largely defeated, many Americans remain upset with still-high prices for groceries, gas, rent and other necessities. Republican former President Donald Trump blames the Biden-Harris administration for sparking an inflationary surge. Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris, in turn, says Trump’s promise to slap tariffs on all imports would raise prices for consumers even further.

Rate cuts by the Fed should, over time, lead to lower borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards, boosting Americans’ finances and supporting more spending and growth.

Homeowners will be able to refinance mortgages at lower rates, saving on monthly payments, and even shift credit card debt to lower-cost personal loans or home equity lines. Businesses may also borrow and invest more.

Average mortgage rates already dropped to an 18-month low of 6.2%, according to Freddie Mac, spurring a jump in demand for refinancings.

“It’s a step in the right direction,” Laura Ros-



BEN CURTIS, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell speaks Wednesday during a news conference at the Federal Reserve in Washington.

ner-Warburton, senior economist of MarcoPolicy Perspectives, said of Wednesday’s Fed move.

The additional rate cuts it indicated it will make, she said, will “prevent risks from building and the unemployment rate from rising. They are trying to keep the economy in good shape.”

In an updated set of projections, the policymakers collectively envision a faster drop in inflation than they did three months ago but also higher unemployment.

They foresee their preferred inflation gauge falling to 2.3% by year’s end, from its current 2.5%, and to 2.1% by the end of 2025.

They expect the unemployment rate to rise further this year, to 4.4%, from 4.2% now, and to remain there by the end of 2025. That’s above their previous forecasts of 4% for the end of this year and 4.2% for 2025.

Powell was pressed at his news conference about whether the Fed’s decision to cut its key rate by an unusually large half-point is an acknowledgement that it waited too long to begin reducing borrowing rates.

“We don’t think we’re behind,” he replied. “We think this is timely. But I think you can take this as a sign of our commitment not to get behind. We’re not seeing rising (unemployment) claims, not seeing

rising layoffs, not hearing from companies that that’s something that’s going to happen.”

He added: “There is thinking that the time to support the labor market is when it’s strong and not when you begin to see the layoffs. We don’t think we need to see further loosening in labor market conditions to get inflation down to 2%.”

The Fed’s next policy meeting is Nov. 6-7 — immediately after the presidential election. By cutting rates this week, soon before the election, the Fed risks attacks from Trump, who complains that lowering rates now amounts to political interference. Yet Politico reported that even some key Senate Republicans who were interviewed expressed support for a Fed rate cut this week.

Powell pushed back against any suggestion that the Fed shouldn’t cut rates so close to an election.

“We’re not serving any politician, any political figure, any cause, any issue,” he said. “It’s just maximum employment and price stability on behalf of all Americans. And that’s how the other central banks are set up, too. It’s a good institutional arrangement, which has been good for the public, and I hope and strongly believe that it will continue.”

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