

Weather

Today—Occasional showers and thunderstorms, high 77-83, low 65-73. Chance of rain is 70 percent. Friday—Variable cloudiness, showers and thundershowers, high 82-87. Yesterday—3 p.m. AQI: 70; temp. range: 86-72. Details on Page B2.

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The Washington Post

Woman Tops List For Court

Arizona Judge Has Strong Credentials, Conservative Views

By Lou Cannon
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sandra D. O'Connor, a prominent Arizona jurist with Republican political credentials, has emerged as a leading candidate for the Supreme Court vacancy that will be created Friday when Justice Potter Stewart retires.

Well-placed administration officials confirmed that O'Connor, who received a high ranking from the Arizona Bar Association and was third in the Stanford law school class in which Justice William H. Rehnquist finished first, had been interviewed for the job. She is believed to be the only potential nominee interviewed so far, and hers is one of a few names, most of them of women, on a "short list" reposing now with a handful of top White House aides and Attorney General William French Smith.

"She hasn't been chosen yet, but she's close," said one source.

O'Connor, a 51-year-old judge of the Arizona Court of Appeals, has enjoyed a meteoric rise through the state's political and professional circles, impressing colleagues with her intellect, demeanor, organizational abilities and conservative views. She received one of the highest ratings of any judge evaluated in a 1980 state bar poll—90 percent favorable.

In addition to her legal credentials, O'Connor has strong backing from Arizona's senators, Barry Goldwater (R) and Dennis DeConcini (D), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and from former House Republican leader John J. Rhodes.

"She's what the president's looking for," said DeConcini. "She believes in the court interpreting the law, not making it."

This was the criterion President Reagan laid down when he announced Stewart's resignation on June 18. The justice had privately made his plans known to the administration two months earlier, giving the White House and the Justice Department a head start on finding his successor.

O'Connor, an Arizona native who was raised on a cattle ranch in the southern part of the state, was appointed in 1969 to fill a vacancy in the state Senate. She subsequently won two terms and was voted majority leader, the first woman in the nation to be elected to such a leadership post. She also is the first Arizona woman to serve on the board of directors of a major bank.

Prominent Republicans including Goldwater and Rhodes urged O'Connor to run for governor four years ago, but she decided to continue her judicial career, which began in 1975 when she was elected a judge of the

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Thursday, July 2, 1981

O'Connor surprises as high court candidate

WASHINGTON (AP) — Judge Sandra D. O'Connor of the Arizona Court of Appeals has emerged as a leading candidate to succeed Justice Potter Stewart on the U.S. Supreme Court, the Washington Post reported today.

"She hasn't been chosen yet, but she's close," the newspaper quoted one unnamed Reagan administration source as saying.

The Post said Mrs. O'Connor, 51, was interviewed for the vacancy by an administration official and was believed to be the only potential nominee to be interviewed.

In another development, the New York Daily News quoted Reagan administration sources in today's editions as saying that U.S. District Judge Lawrence W. Pierce, a 56-year-old black, is also being con-



Judge O'Connor

sidered for the high-court seat.

Administration officials said Mrs. O'Connor is on a "short list" of leading candidates — most of them women — for Stewart's seat, which becomes vacant when he retires Friday, according to The Post.

During his campaign last year, President Reagan said he wanted to name a woman to one of the first vacancies on the nine-member court. The White House, however, has kept open the possibility that a man could be named to succeed Stewart.

Until now, one of the women mentioned most often as Stewart's likely successor has been Cornelia Kennedy of Detroit, a member of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The Post said Mrs. O'Connor has support from both of Arizona's senators, Republican Barry

Goldwater and Democrat Dennis DeConcini, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

"She's what the president's looking for," the newspaper quoted DeConcini as saying. "She believes in the court interpreting the law, not making it."

Mrs. O'Connor is a former Republican majority leader of the Arizona Senate, the first woman in the nation to hold such a leadership post.

She was elected a Superior Court judge in Phoenix in 1975 and was appointed to the state high court.

Mrs. O'Connor received a 90 percent favorable ranking from the Arizona Bar Association in 1980 and finished third in the Stanford law school class in which Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist finished first.

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Arizonan Is On List for Justice Post

WASHINGTON (AP) — Judge Sandra D. O'Connor of the Arizona Court of Appeals is on a narrow list of candidates to succeed Justice Potter Stewart on the U.S. Supreme Court.

It could not be learned how many other names were on the narrow list. But one administration official who declined to be named said that a decision by President Reagan on his choice was expected soon.

This source said that Attorney General William French Smith had developed an initial list of 20 to 25 names from many more who had been suggested. One Justice Department source said the administration had been given the names of about 50 different people by various congressmen, lawyers, interest groups and others.

The administration source said that the attorney general culled the names to 20 to 25 by reviewing the background of the individuals suggested, reading their opinions and writings and discussing them with acquaintances and colleagues.

Smith and Reagan then narrowed the list and are well along in the selection process, this source said.

Those who are under serious consideration have been interviewed or are about to be interviewed by the attorney general or other top Justice Department officials.

In today's editions, the Washington Post said Mrs. O'Connor has emerged as a leading candidate.

"She hasn't been chosen yet, but she's close," the newspaper quoted one unnamed Reagan administration source as saying.

The Post said Mrs. O'Connor, 51, was interviewed for the vacancy by an administration official and was



SANDRA O'CONNOR:
in line for justice post.

believed to be the only potential nominee to be interviewed.

In another development, the New York Daily News quoted Reagan administration sources in today's editions as saying that U.S. District Judge Lawrence W. Pierce, a 56-year-old black from New York City, is also being considered for the high-court seat.

Administration officials said Mrs. O'Connor is on a "short list" of leading candidates — most of them women — for Stewart's seat, which becomes vacant when he retires Friday, according to The Post.

Arizona Woman Heading List For Supreme Court Vacancy

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Maricopa County (Phoenix) Superior Court. A year and a half ago, Gov. Bruce Babbitt appointed her to the appeals court.

"There is a tendency to classify her as politically conservative," said Alan A. Matheson, dean of the Arizona State University College of Law. "She has good judgment, is articulate and well-liked." He said she has been involved in few controversial cases.

O'Connor was co-chairman of the Arizona committee campaigning for President Nixon's reelection in 1972 and was Arizona Woman of the Year that same year.

She and her husband, John, a well-known Phoenix attorney and active Republican, have three children. In the early 1960s she served as a deputy district attorney in San Mateo County, south of San Francisco, while her husband completed law school.

O'Connor is in Washington this week and was interviewed yesterday by an administration official.

Administration sources emphasized that the president has not made a decision, but one well-placed source stressed, as he did last week, that a strong effort is being made to find a "highly qualified woman." The name mentioned most, until now, is that of another conservative Republican jurist, Cornelia Kennedy of Detroit, a 58-year-old member of the 6th U.S. Court of Appeals.

One administration official said yesterday that Kennedy has support on Capitol Hill, and her name was on the list submitted to the White House by Senate Judiciary Chairman Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

The White House has ruled out nominating anyone in the administration for the high court vacancy, sources said yesterday. That has eliminated Elizabeth Hanford Dole, a White House aide and wife of Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.).

Staff writer Fred Barbash and special correspondent Al Senia contributed to this article.



SANDRA D. O'CONNOR
... judge, former state senator

Woman Judge a Top Contender To Fill Supreme Court Vacancy

Sandra D. O'Connor, a 51-year-old judge of the Arizona Court of Appeals, has moved into position as a top contender to fill the Supreme Court vacancy, administration sources said last night.

They confirmed that Judge O'Connor was on the so-called "short list" of possible nominees by President Reagan to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Justice Potter Stewart and said that she was one of a very few that had already been interviewed by the administration in the past few days.

These sources declined to disclose how many names were on the "short list" and how many of those were women, but an original "long list" had about 25 possible candidates for the vacancy.

Judge O'Connor, wife of a Phoenix attorney, has been an active member of the Republican Party, and is described by party members as politically conservative. She served two full terms in the Arizona state senate and was elected majority leader before being elected a county judge in that state in 1975. In 1972 she was co-

chairman of the Arizona state committee in behalf of President Nixon's re-election.

While acknowledging that various prominent women have been mentioned for the vacancy in keeping with a campaign promise by Reagan that he would name a woman to the high court, a well-placed administration source indicated last night that Judge O'Connor was more than just one of those many names. She has emerged as one of the very leading candidates for the post, he said.

There was no indication how many more potential nominees would be interviewed nor when the president would announce his choice.

Justice Stewart's retirement is due to take effect tomorrow. The "short list" of potential nominees has been compiled by White House and Justice Department officials. The president and Attorney General William French Smith have discussed possible names, according to a White House aide.

New York Times Service