

FIRST ORDER OF THE COURT: WHAT TO WEAR

Nine new judges face weighty decision with robes of many colors

By **Tonya Alanez**
STAFF WRITER

Who knew the choices included wool, silk or polyester. Monogrammed, elbow patches or doctoral sleeve stripes. Blue, green or traditional black.

We're talking judicial robes.

Each judge buys his or her own, and can spend from \$150 to more than \$500.

Nine new judges will take part in a formal robing ceremony today at the Broward County Courthouse. They've already been presiding over cases, managing dockets. But first, they had to find a robe.

"That's one of the things you don't think about when you run for judge," said Judge Bernie Bobber, elected last November. "They give you a gizillion different fabrics. You could go snaps, you could go zipper, you could go Velcro. You could go all these different choices."

Judicial fashion is not just basic black anymore, and a number of Broward's jurists bring some personal panache to the bench.

Judge Kathleen Ireland wears green, of course. Judge Steven Shutter opts for blue. Judge Peggy Gehl favors the velvet-paneled front and Judge Jeffrey Streitfeld has a taste for traditional puffy bell sleeves.

Judge Ilona Holmes often accessorizes her robe with a traditional African kente-cloth stole and Judge Merrilee Ehrlich, one of the judiciary's newest members, adorns hers with a lacy collar.

But for the majority, tradition reigns.

"I think basic black is the way

» **ROBES** PAGE 5

Ceremony

Nine new judges will take part in a robing ceremony at 1 p.m. today.

Page 5



Bucking tradition

Although many judges prefer the traditional basic black robe, some say they prefer alternate colors that are less intimidating. Judge Fred Beriman presides over his courtroom in light gray.



Arbiters of fashion

Judge Kathleen Ireland, left, and Judge Marcia Beach exercise their own judgment in courtroom style.



His — and hers

Judge Merrilee Ehrlich said she found judicial robes "historically very severe and masculine," so she uses lace to give hers "a softer edge."