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By Jerry Landers

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Justice Albert E. Harrison Jr. will shortly announce his retirement from the Supreme Court of Virginia, sources told The Times-Dispatch yesterday.

Harrison, a former governor and conservative Democrat from southwest Virginia, began his 23rd year on the bench in October.

Reached yesterday, Harrison said he was not resigning from the court but added that if he had plans to step down, he would notify the governor first before making any announcement.

Gov. John N. Dalton and Gov.-elect Charles S. Robb, both in Williamsburg, said they had heard something of Harrison's plans. Robb said that Harrison was the one to make any such announcement.

The announcement is expected to come next week and the retirement to take effect next month to allow the Democrat-controlled General Assembly to appoint a successor.

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Speculation on his successor is already.rife. Possibly topping the list is William B. Spong Jr., 61, former U.S. senator, current dean of the College of William and Mary law school and a former law partner of Lt. Gov.-elect Richard F. Davis.

Spong also has been mentioned as a possible successor to Harrison, who is 75 on Jan. 1, the mandatory retirement age for justices appointed after July 1, 1970.
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Several months ago as a possible Democratic candidate for reeling him, Murray C. Byrd Jr.'s seat. But sources at the State Capi
to and in Williamsburg say that Harrison would be seeking a seat on the state Supreme Court. Col-
lege ofeping that he has been ap-
plicated to the position, they do not say if he would be interested in filling a vacant seat. Harrison has met inform-
cally with legislators about his plans.

But there are others on the list of potential successors, particularly those of those who are disappointed when the legis-
aturu chose Maurice B. Ste-
Phens, Jr., of Covington to succeed Chief Justice Law-
rence W. Elyson last year. For-
eral Lee, former attorney gener-
als, and current judges Marvin F. Cole of Kilmarnock, Charles F. Russell of Alexandria, Robert P. Harrelson of Harrisonburg, Douglas M. Smith of Let-
town, and John S. C. White of Virginia Beach were among those considered last year before Stephens was chosen. Another judge, Thomas B. McPherson of North, was mentioned as well last year.

But one name, according to those holding similar beliefs, enjoys the reputation of Harrison...