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Choi's focus: 'To get kids on the right track'

The new Ramsey County attorney makes history as first Korean-American to hold such a post.

By PAT PHEIFER†, Star Tribune

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John Choi was sworn in Tuesday as Ramsey County attorney. He is only the fifth person to hold the job since 1933 and is the first Korean-American nationwide to be elected to such a position.

THE OFFICE: As county attorney, he will lead a staff of about 325 with an annual budget of about \$35 million.

PRIORITIES: Choi said his priorities will be "making sure we have adequate consequences for violent offenders and continuing to be tough on crimes involving a gun." He will continue with the truancy intervention and the family truancy intervention programs and will look for ways to create diversion programs "to get kids on the right track." He will also continue to coordinate with other agencies to prevent domestic violence and hold offenders

accountable.

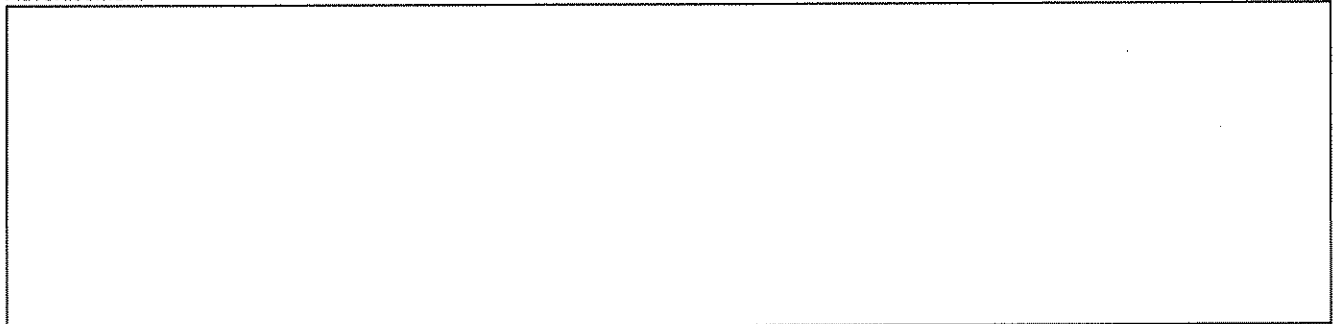
COMING TO AMERICA: Choi was 3 years old when his family immigrated to the United States from South Korea. His family lived in a low-income apartment complex in St. Paul when they arrived. His father worked at the Coca-Cola plant and wrote for the Korean Central Daily newspaper. His mother worked at Unisys Corp. and later as a nurse.


"My parents were looking for a better life in this country," Choi said at the swearing-in ceremony. "They never thought that their son would ever end up being elected the county attorney, but it says a lot about how great this country is."

BACKGROUND: Choi graduated from St. Thomas Academy, Marquette University and Hamline University Law School. He was a Humphrey fellow at the University of Minnesota. He was in private practice at Kennedy & Graven, where he focused on government relations, administrative law, municipal law and civil litigation. He was St. Paul city attorney from 2006 to 2010. After he resigned as city attorney to concentrate on his campaign, he joined the firm of McGrann, Shea, Carnival, Straughn & Lamb.

NOT ALONE: Choi isn't the only new county

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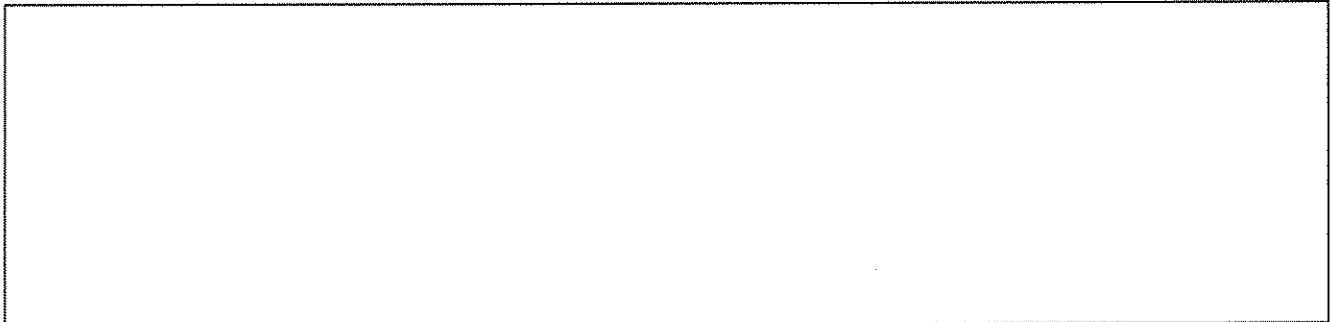
attorney in the Twin Cities metro area. Tony Palumbo succeeded Robert M.A. Johnson in Anoka County after Johnson and his father, Robert W. Johnson, held the position for a combined 60 years. In Washington County, Peter Orput is taking over the spot that was held for 12 years by Doug Johnson, and in Carver County, Mark Andrew Metz defeated three-year incumbent Jim Keeler in the November election.

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