

From: [Dennis Anderson](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] support for John Mercer
Date: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 11:30:46 AM

Hello,

This letter is intended to provide support for the nomination of John Mercer for judge. As a radio broadcaster for the past 30 years in Lake County, I have been involved in many community organizations and activities where John and I have worked together. These would include The Mission Valley Friends of the Arts, Port Polson Players, Greater Polson Community Foundation, Polson Chamber of Commerce, and others. John has played a critical role as an active and respected member of these groups, as well as other boards of academic and medical facilities, and his deep and broad experience in the Montana Legislature as outlined in his incredible resume. I have known John for 30 years, and truly admire his ethics, wisdom, experience, knowledge, common sense, practical application of opinion, joyful intention to be helpful, and am proud to call him a dear friend, also. He is a beacon of light in our appreciative community and in the state of Montana.

I highly recommend his nomination, and I am delighted he would like to serve as judge.

Thank you.

--

Dennis L. Anderson
President

1-800-750-5377 studio 406-212-5712 cell
P.O. Box 10, Polson, MT 59860



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April 4, 2024

Hannah Slusser

Governor's Office

PO Box 200801

Helena, MT 59620

Dear Hannah:

I would like to nominate John Mercer to the position of District Court Judge in Polson. We have known John his whole life and respect his opinions. He is a man of high integrity.

Please consider John for this position.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Marcia Amrine



Bill Amrine

33675 Mission Dam Rd

St. Ignatius, MT 59865

406-241-0971

From: [Frank & Mary Mutch](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for John Mercer for Montana 20th Judicial District Judge
Date: Friday, April 5, 2024 11:57:00 AM

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:Mail[go.microsoft.com]) for Windows

Mary and I fully support John Mercer for this open position. We have known him since he first graduated from law school and were close friends of his parents. He represented the seller of a business we purchased here in Polson and he dealt very fairly and professionally in this transaction. We know him to be a dedicated public servant with long experience at both the state and local levels. He is fair and honest and we know he would make a good judge and faithfully carry out his oath of office. Thanks, Frank & Mary Mutch Finley Point, Polson, MT

Slusser, Hannah

From: Owen, Molly
Sent: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 12:42 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: John Mercer

Good morning Ms. Slusser, Governor Gianforte, and Lt. Governor Juras,

I would like to recommend John Mercer to fill Judge Christopher's term as District Judge (Department 2) in Lake and Sanders County. As you can tell from his application, Mr. Mercer has the legal acumen to be able to quickly get up to speed and ensure that Department 2 runs smoothly. I very much look forward to working with him.

Sincerely,
Molly Owen
20th Judicial District Judge
406-883-7251

From: ["Dennis C. Burns \(Bright Angel Productions@\)"](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Cc: [Brad J. Luck](#); nellen@nellenlaw.com; [Mark & Kimberly Staples](#); [joe marra](#); [Kristen Juras](#); [Mark MacDonald](#); [Mary MacDonald](#); [Dan McCarthy](#); [Dick & Eileen Dolezal](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] A few words on behalf of John Mercer
Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 2:59:20 PM

I am extremely heartened that Polson attorney John Mercer has offered to return to public service via the Lake County judiciary. As a fifth-generation Montanan (from the Deer Lodge Valley), and a twenty year homeowner on Finley Point, and an attorney myself for decades, I can tell you that John is an exceptional person and a gifted attorney.

I wouldn't advise anyone to wander very deep into property law without the counsel of someone like John. And to clarify, I have personally so engaged his services as an attorney. As with the old Hemingway era expression of someone being a man's man, which he is, John is also a lawyer's lawyer. I trust that the Governor, and his staff, will recognize these qualities, and take him up on the offer to be of further service to those of us in Lake County. He would be an exceptional judge.

Thank you and best wishes.

Dennis C. Burns
BRIGHT ANGEL PRODUCTIONS®
5465 Shooting Star Lane/Box 2680
Avila Beach, CA 93424-2680

onskidoobay@mac.com
214.478.4265 (M)

State Bar of Texas: 03444300

At Flathead Lake: 31614 Catamount Lane (N. Finley Point Rd.), Polson, MT 59860.

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From: stevedennison63@gmail.com
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FW: Letter of Recommendation for John A. Mercer, Polson, MT. for District Judge
Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2024 4:02:00 PM

John Mercer in my opinion has an excellent demeanor, moral compass and legal expertise to serve citizens of Lake County as their District Judge. John Mercer is a partner in Turnage Mercer Wall, PLLP, Polson, Montana.

His professional biography is impressive: BA University of Montana; JD Northwestern University; Private Law Practice 1982 to Date; Speaker of the House, MT Legislature; Chair of MT Board of Regents; Distinguished Service Award from Montana Bar; Community Service Award, University of Montana.

John is a family man having retired from a successful political career to be at home and actively raise his four children. He is currently giving his time to serve on Polson School Board.

With forty-two years in private law practice, he knows Montana life and commerce issues. He knows criminal law as a defense lawyer and has served as a special prosecutor for the Polson Police Department.

In summary, his personal life, education, public service, civil and criminal experience provide a resume that few could equal across the great state of Montana. He is most worthy of appointment and will serve with distinction.

Steve & Vicki Dennison
32345 Red Horn Road
St Ignatius, MT 59865

11 April 2024

Subject: Support for Judge Applicant John A. Mercer, Twentieth Judicial District

I strongly support the selection of John A. Mercer to fill the vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District. My family has sought the council of John over many years, and we have had estate documents created by him for two generations. We have placed complete trust in John's guidance and in the thoroughness and accuracy of documents created by him. John has proven through his career path over the years that his judgement is excellent, and his ability to work with people of varying views results in legal and political judgements reflecting fairness for those involved. The residents of Sanders and Lake Counties count on judges whose legal opinions are fair and consistent with our laws. John's long and varied professional career make him well suited for this very important position. We can count on him to adhere to and administer the law with fairness.

Ruth Cheney

From: [Kathryn L. Johnson](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] A letter of support for the temporary appointment of John Mercer for District Judge, 20th Judicial District.
Date: Monday, April 15, 2024 1:11:25 PM

John Mercer has been a friend of my family for at least 40 years. He has also advised on wills, trusts, and other matters to members of my family from my grandfather, my mother, my stepfather. For my sister-in-law, Kathe A. Johnson, and I, he oversaw the probate of my father's estate, and recently advised me on the estate of my late husband. In all situations, John went beyond the expectations of all in my family. He is always highly organized, clear speaking and listens well. He is empathetic when it is appropriate. He will be a very efficient judge.

His record of public service and of holding offices is exceptional and is detailed in his application. Therefore, John, who has knowledge of diverse areas of Montana law, will be an effective judge.

There is a personal side to John Mercer's record that illustrates that he will bring dignity and clarity to the 20th Judicial Court. He has a clear record of upholding the law and is an example to his family. He is a devoted father to his four children as he left holding public offices to help raise them. This family orientation will serve the citizens well when it comes to the numerous child custody cases that come before the court in Lake County.

John is versatile. He is not a one note person but has a creative and artistic side. He has written two full-length, family-oriented plays (that I know of) performed by the Port Polson Playhouse. He has participated as an actor and singer, also encouraging and including family members to act at the Port Polson Playhouse. Being an example of a contributing citizen of the city and county shows how much he cares about the community.

One of the most notable examples of John's concern for the future of the community is as one of the founders of the Greater Polson Community Foundation (GPCF). He has been the Director since its' formation in 2008. Every year a variety of charitable organizations (the Mission Valley aquatics pool, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Miracle of America Museum, Helping Hands, Cheerful Heart, to name a few) benefit from the work of the GPCF. The Foundation has established a perpetual fund to continue to support and benefit Polson and Lake County, through John's and other founder's efforts.

For all these reasons, I heartily support appointing John Mercer as temporary District Judge of the 20th Judicial District.

Sincerely,

Kathryn L. Johnson
Polson, MT
406 883-9367

From: [Wilma Mixon-Hall](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] John Mercer
Date: Thursday, April 18, 2024 12:43:21 PM

I am a Polson real estate Broker of several decades. Over the years, I have turned to John for various legal advice and more extensively needed Johns help with a large Estate, since 2021. I have come to know who John is, and I admire him for his aptitude, his vast legal understanding, expertise, and I like him for his professional decorum. I don't think there could be a more obvious candidate. The selfless commitment to step into the judicial gap speaks to his honor, and that is the best we can hope for.... an asset such as John, who assuredly will be an honorable Judge. I am certainly not alone, but want to say that support John Mercer wholly, and it is apparent he wholly supports our community, our state, and our legislature. Thank you for seeing him to the chair.

Wilma Mixon-Hall
406 261 9293

Broker 9548
Savoir Faire Properties
109 3rd Ave E,
Polson MT 59860

From: monteturner54@gmail.com
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] John Mercer
Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024 7:04:59 AM

Good Morning,

I'm reading the front page of the Clark Fork Valley Press in Sanders County and I now live in Mineral County, so I'm quite a distance from where this process is taking place. But as an outsider who was in Missoula media at the time John Mercer was in the House, I can say that I do not remember meeting a more delightful politician with positive outlook. John was obvious in is love for civic duty and remained stoic when adversaries became ugly. He also was a helluva an addition to the Port Polson Players when I attended their performances, again when I lived a different life. If I could do anything to help with your decision as a resident of Montana, but not in your district, I'd like to say that my dealings with John Mercer have been 100% positive. He's one attorney that gives credence to the others that cast a dark cloud. It's reassuring to see that he is finally gray as I am!

Monte Turner
28 Edgewater Lane
Superior, MT 69872
(406) 822-5915

April 12, 2024

Dear Governor Gianforte and Lt. Governor Juras:

I am writing in extremely strong support of former Speaker of the House John Mercer for the appointed position of District Judge in Lake and Sanders Counties. I make this unsolicited recommendation without reservation and without communicating with Speaker Mercer about this matter. I am truly excited about the prospect of such a high quality, highly qualified individual becoming a district judge.

John and I first met in 1990 while I was campaigning for a seat in the Montana House of Representatives. During the 1991 legislative session, I had the honor of sitting next to our Minority Leader Mercer, and we became good friends. John might not have even been 30 years old then, but he exhibited tremendous intellect and leadership skills that guided us through a very difficult session. The next session, John was voted Speaker of the House, and I again was honored to sit closely to him. That was the first of John's four times serving as Speaker before term limits brought his tenure to an end. Our friendship grew, and my admiration and respect for Speaker Mercer also grew as he guided not only our Caucus but also the entire House through another difficult session in 1993. Our Caucus was comprised of a wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, and viewpoints, but John was always able to hold us together while allowing each member to know that their concerns and opinions were valid and worthy of consideration.

We collaborated well during my time in the Senate, and I also had the privilege of serving with John on the Board of Regents of Higher Education, which he expertly chaired. We had a lot of fun reuniting, and once again his amazing intellect, quick wit, and leadership skills greatly impressed me.

I imagine the qualities you are looking for in a judge would include high intelligence, strong legal acumen, impressive experience as an attorney, solid leadership skills to run a courtroom, compassion, a keen knowledge of and respect for the U.S. and Montana Constitutions, great insight, and fairness. John scores extremely highly in each of those areas.

I will address only one of those traits – fairness. Before the start of the 1993 legislative session, the new Speaker explained his internal reforms to the Minority leaders, including workspace for Minority members besides their desks on the House Floor, a Minority vice-chair position for each House committee, and access for Minority members of all the House staff offices. Those reforms are taken for granted now, but they did not exist before John Mercer became Speaker. With the help of Chief Clerk Marilyn Miller, Speaker Mercer effectively and forever changed the culture of the House of Representatives. When asked why he implemented those changes, he simply responded, "Because I wanted the Minority to be treated the way I wanted to be treated when we were in their shoes." To me, that example defines fairness and well illustrates the type of district judge John will make.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to addressing my friend as Judge Mercer.

Sincerely,

Mike Foster
Bozeman, Montana

218 Pheasant Ridge
Polson, MT 59860
April 21, 2024

Boards and Appointments Advisor
Governor's Office
P.O. Box 20081
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Sir:

Attorney John A. Mercer is extremely qualified to fill the vacancy in the 20th Judicial District in Lake and Sanders Counties.

John is well educated, articulate, knows the law, and has had a successful law practice in Polson for over 40 years.

He believes in serving the community. For example he served for two terms in the Montana House of Representatives where he was the youngest member in Montana history to be elected Chairman of the House of Representatives. John has also served as Chair of the Montana Board of Regents and has recently served on the Polson School Board.

He is well respected in Polson for his knowledge, professionalism, honesty and dedication. John is an excellent choice for the 20th judicial District position. I have known him for 40 plus years. I am proud to recommend John's appointment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henrietta M. Jarecki". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid.

Henrietta M. Jarecki

Francis (Frank) S Stock
POB 1001
Polson MT 59860
April 16, 2024

Attn; Hannah Slusser
Governor Greg Gianforte
POB 200801
Helena MT 59602

Dear Governor Gianforte,

This letter is written to support John Mercer to fill the judicial vacancy covering Lake and Sanders Counties.

I first met John when he began working for the firm of Turnage and McNeil. At that time, 42 years ago Jean Turnage was the banks attorney and I was a Vice President of the bank. Jean Turnage was also President of Montana State Senate and was later elected Chief Justice of Montana Supreme Court. CB McNeil was elected judge for the 20th District. Both Turnage and McNeil were excellent attorneys and they recognized John Mercer as an intelligent, competent, energetic young attorney and selected John to join their law firm.

Early in John's legal career he was elected to the Montana Legislature and served as the youngest Speaker of the House for three terms and minority leader for one term.

John's political career begin at the same time with the election of judgeships of the two senior members of the law firm. John had plenty of work including being the bank's attorney and the bank added a trust department which increased the need for legal advise.

The bank was exclusively owned by one person although some shares had been transferred to his son who was a commercial airline pilot with several thousand hours of flight time. The son was also a computer programmer and had created a program to keep the pilot scheduling in compliance with the FAA hours of flight rules, pilot seniority rules and union rules for UPS which had a lot of planes in the air freight business.

The bank had a computer and first ATM in Lake County. The technology attracted the son's attention and he developed a telephone banking system to give verbal response for balance, if deposits were made, checks cleared and transfer funds between accounts. Common technology now but new 25 years ago . The son then started to market telephone banking system and sold one to a bank in Madison, Wisconsin and the son

and an officer of the bank flew in the son's airplane to Madison to install the telephone banking system. On the way back to Polson the plane making and instrument approach in a storm crashed in the mountains west of Kalispell killing both the son and bank officer. The crash left two widows both with grade school age children. The bank officer's sister was an attorney but John did assist with workman comp claims and showed compassion to both families. John helped the son's family and help continued through childhood until the children were through high school and after their mother passed away with breast cancer. About a year after the crash the FAA investigation concluded the crash was caused by an altimeter feeding false information to the autopilot and this was not the first time Honeywell equipment had caused an altitude problem.

The owner of the bank had been spending his winters in San Diego and I had been promoted to Chief Executive Officer and had been managing the bank for a few years. The bank's owner had to sell the bank since he was in his eighties and his grandchildren were in school and his only child had died. As a heavily involved observer John did an outstanding job helping the family through a difficult time with both significant legal and personal issues.

I should mention John is my go-to attorney when I need advice and he helped probating my mother in laws estate.

I was a member of the Judicial Nomination commission first appointed by Governor Stan Stephens and reappointed by Governor Marc Racicot. If John Mercer had applied to fill a judge vacancy then his name would have been on a short list sent to the Governor. John would follow the Montana State Constitution and the laws passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. He is also respected in the community and was elected to the Polson School Board and also serves on Greater Polson Community Foundation and Polson Scholarship and Education Foundation boards. It is important a judge should promptly make decisions which John does.

John Mercer would be an excellent choice for a judge for Lake and Sanders Counties.

Sincerely,



Francis S Stock

From: [Abby Moscatel](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support
Date: Thursday, April 18, 2024 6:40:38 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

I have worked with John Mercer on several projects. He has an excellent legal mind. I believe he would serve the bench well.

-Attorney Abby Moscatel
www.blacktaillaw.com [[blacktaillaw.com](#)]

Get [Outlook for iOS](#) [[aka.ms](#)]

James Raymond
407 First Street West
Polson, MT 59860
MT Bar #4506
406.261.6545

April 10, 2024

Office of the Governor
ATTN: Judicial Nominations
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: 20th Judicial District, Lake and Sanders County
Application of **John Mercer**

Dear Sir or Ma'am:

This letter is in support of John Mercer's nomination to complete Judge Christopher's term on the bench in the 20th Judicial District.

John would be an excellent choice. He is a lifelong, very active community member personally known by thousands of local voters and citizens from all walks of life. As well, after some forty years in law practice, including eight terms in the Legislature, John is widely viewed as a experienced, wise, and knowledgeable practitioner of the law, and no less so by his legal colleagues, including this one. As a consequence John will not appear a stranger thrust upon the citizens here deciding what are to them critical issues in their lives, but instead as a known quantity of proven probity and understanding with a very great deal of local knowledge. John's many positive qualities are exactly what litigants, and their lawyers, are seeking in any judge.

It's been my pleasure to practice in the same small town as John for nearly three decades, sometimes on the same side, sometimes on the other side, but whatever the stance of any single relationship John's integrity and professionalism are bedrock-reliable. These are particularly important characteristics to other lawyers, and to the bench, as well. I am unable to think of any person more uniquely well-suited to filling the vacant 20th Judicial District bench. I hope the panel will consider John's application favorably.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Best Regards,

James Raymond

May 8, 2024

Jeffrey J. Smith
News Director, Anderson Broadcasting

news@andersonbroadcasting.com

406-751-7498

Governor Greg Gianforte.

I write this letter in support of John Mercer's appointment to fill a vacancy in the 20th Judicial District. I have been the News Director at Anderson Broadcasting since Sept. of '97. My knowledge of John Mercer and his experience goes farther back to well before I started here. Now, having been here for almost 27 years, I can say the people of this Judicial District are lucky to have a person with John's experience agree to fill in, knowing that it is on an interim basis. John's knowledge of law in combination with the history of this area of Western Montana will serve him and the people of the district well. Please appoint John Mercer to fill this very important position. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectively, Jeffrey J. Smith

TURNAGE MERCER & WALL, PLLP

J. A. Turnage 1926-2015

John A. Mercer

Chuck Wall*

*also licensed in South Carolina

Attorneys at Law

312 1st Street East

Polson, MT 59860

Telephone: (406)883-5367

Fax: (406) 883-5328

ChuckWall@TurnageMercerWall.com

May 6, 2024

Governor Greg Gianforte

P.O. Box 200801

Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: 20th Judicial District Court Appointment

Governor Gianforte – Please accept this as my letter of support/recommendation regarding John Mercer’s offer to fill the current Judicial vacancy in Dept. 2 of the 20th Judicial District Court, Lake and Sanders Counties.

John’s legal pedigree alone more than qualifies him for this position. He graduated with high honors from the University of Montana and received his law degree from prestigious Northwestern University. He trained under and worked with none other than Chief Justice Jean A. Turnage, Judge C.B. McNeill, John French, and numerous other esteemed judges and barristers. He is licensed to practice in all State, City and County courts of this state including the Montana Supreme Court, as well as the Supreme Court of the United States and even the state of Oregon. He also spent sixteen very productive years in the Montana Legislature, eight of which were as Speaker of the House. He is highly respected throughout this state and elsewhere. The knowledge, skills, temperament, leadership, and other traits he picked up along the way – including those with which he was born and/or were instilled by his parents and others in his life – have crafted him into one of the finest attorneys and citizens I have had the honor to know and work with.

John will bring to the bench a machine-like drive to get cases scheduled, heard and decided. He will apply his hard-earned wisdom; a prodigious understanding and application of the law; a steadfast consideration of the issues, the merits, and the parties; and he will do so with exemplary, non-biased fairness. Coupled with that, luck would have it that John and the current judicial assistant worked together for many years. She

is as smart as any lawyer I know and ten times as organized, and her and John's proven ability to work together is truly the perfect storm for the situation at hand. I'm quite certain the status of affairs the incoming judge will inherit in January 2025 will be much appreciated thanks to what John and Shari will accomplish together.

John has been a pillar of this community for many years. Accepting this responsibility will be a difficult, oft-unpleasant, and thankless job. Someone, however, has to do it, and fortunately John has agreed to tender his services to the Court and those who come before it for the next 7 ½ months to decide what will be the most important affairs in many peoples' lives. Those of us who know him are grateful for what he is doing, and scores who don't will be when it's all said and done.

Please give him your utmost consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chuck Wall', with a stylized, cursive script.

Chuck Wall

CDW: dg