
MOLLY OWEN
DISTRICT JUDGE



TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
STATE OF MONTANA

LAKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
POLSON, MONTANA 59860
(406) 883-7250

SANDERS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
THOMPSON FALLS, MONTANA 59873
(406) 827-6962

January 14, 2025

Governor Gianforte
Attn: Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Mr. John Mercer's Application for 20th Judicial District Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I would like to enthusiastically endorse John Mercer for the vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District, Department Two. I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Mercer from May 2024 to January 3, 2025, in his capacity as District Judge after you previously appointed him to fill a vacancy in Department Two.

There are a variety of reasons why you should again appoint Mr. Mercer. Primarily, he did not miss one day of work during his eight-month-long appointment. Because of this, Mr. Mercer accomplished a tremendous amount in a short time. First, he worked diligently through a lengthy backlog of cases. Second, the Twentieth Judicial District's Local Rules had not been updated since 2009. Mr. Mercer decided we should update them, so we spent months working together and were able to promulgate new rules in September. Third, when Mr. Mercer and I discovered that two individuals who we had each ordered to be committed to the custody of the Montana State Hospital had not been transported to the hospital and were—after more than a week—still in the Lake County Jail, we were both dismayed. Mr. Mercer coordinated a meeting with community stakeholders and local legislators where we discussed the issue. This has already engendered change—Lake County Commissioner Gale Decker convened a meeting a few weeks later with the newly hired C.E.O. of Western Montana Mental Health Center to discuss the possibility of re-opening our local in-patient mental health center.

Next, Mr. Mercer should be appointed because he is a respected member of our local bar and of our local community. He has lived in Polson for almost all his life. He was recently a member of the Polson School Board. And, he served our community in the Montana House of Representatives from 1984 to 2000.

Additionally, Mr. Mercer has the benefit of knowing how to do the job. He has conducted jury trials. He

has successfully conducted a judicial mediation. He has issued timely, well-researched, and thorough orders on a wide range of complex matters. He is the epitome of an outstanding District Judge. He is fair, courteous, compassionate, intelligent, and hardworking.

Finally, my endorsement of Mr. Mercer should not be interpreted as disrespect to the remaining candidates. I have had a few cases with Mr. Johnson and always found him to be prepared, intelligent, and friendly. I have not yet had the opportunity to work with Ms. Kuykendall and Ms. Lincoln. Instead, my endorsement of Mr. Mercer is founded upon the Twentieth Judicial District's need for stability and continuity. Mr. Mercer is the only candidate who can provide this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Molly Owen", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Molly Owen
District Judge

From: [Stephanie Morrow](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] John Mercer
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 5:52:43 PM

Greetings,

I would like to share my thoughts on the open judge position in the 20th Judicial District Court.

While I do not have any opposition to the other candidates, I do feel that John Mercer is a good fit for the 20th. He stepped into the position when the district really needed the assistance, and since then, Judge Owen and Mr. Mercer have worked well as a team to effectuate positive changes in the district. Based on working with him over the past few months, I feel Mr. Mercer offers the professionalism, continuity, and stability the district needs and deserves.

Best regards,

Stephanie A. Morrow, RPR
Official Court Reporter

Sent from my iPhone

January 4, 2025

Dear Governor Gianforte and Lt. Governor Juras:

I am writing to recommend and request that you re-appoint John Mercer of Polson for the open position of District Judge in Lake and Sanders Counties.

During the Christmas break, John and I visited mostly to extend well-wishes and catch up on family news. Not surprisingly, we also addressed the unusual situation where the person who won election for this particular district judge position resigned prior to being sworn in. During our conversation, John stated that he has decided he would like to continue serving as district judge and hopes you will appoint him to continue in that role.

John did not ask me to write a letter of recommendation, nor have I informed him that I would do so. Admittedly, I am unaware of the decisions he has made as district judge, which limits my ability to point to any specific cases or judgments that would bolster my argument that John deserves reappointment. However, I am very familiar with his character, intellect, conservative foundation, and work ethic. He is exactly the kind of person that I want to serve as a district judge (or beyond). My failure was not working to convince John to run for this position during the last election cycle, but I plan to be much more diligent when the position is once again on the ballot in November. The people of Lake and Sanders Counties deserve a high quality district judge, and John Mercer is exactly that person.

For background information and more details, please review the letter of support that I sent on April 12, 2024.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

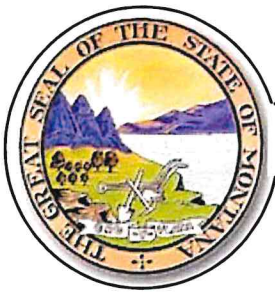
Mike Foster
Bozeman, Montana

To Governor Giafiurte

I know the perfect candidate for the District Judge position for Lake and Sanders County. Mr. John Mursser in Polson. I mean he's already acting judge.

Lynn Delecaris

lynndelecaris@gmail.com



Lake County
Commissioners

406-883-7204

LAKE COUNTY

106 4th Ave.

Polson, Mt. 59860

January 16, 2025

Hannah Slusser
Office of the Governor
Nominatejudges@mt.gov
Helena, MT

The Lake County Commissioners would like to heartily endorse Mr. John Mercer to fill the vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District that serves Lake and Sanders County.

As you are aware, Judge Mercer recently served out the remainder of the term of Judge Deborah "Kim" Christopher. By all accounts, Judge Mercer's performance during this time was exemplary. He disposed of a significant backlog of cases and established a good working relationship with the Lake County Attorney's Office and the Clerk of District Court. It is important to residents of both counties that this working relationship continue into the future.


Judge Mercer brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of western Montana to this position. Significant portions of Lake and Sanders County operate under Public Law 280 in a way that is unique in the State. Again, Judge Mercer's understanding of the application of PL 280 is extremely valuable when presiding over trials of Tribal members accused of committing felonies on the Flathead Reservation.


We believe that the appointment of Judge Mercer to this position is in the best interest of all residents of Lake County, and without reservation, we recommend him for this position.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF LAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Gale Decker, Chairman


Steve Stanley, Member


William D. Barron, Member

From: [Lyn Fricker](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Twentieth Judicial District
Date: Wednesday, January 15, 2025 1:48:43 PM

I'm emailing in support of John Mercer. I was the Clerk of Court in Lake County when Mr. Mercer filled in for the resigning Judge Christopher. John did an amazing job of straightening out what had become a total mess. He was a natural as a judge. He was fast and efficient and worked hard. My office was so lucky to have him step in. He is really dedicated and earned everyone's respect immediately. He would be and has been a fair and competent Judge. Lyn Platt Fricker former Clerk of District Court from 1991 to 2024.
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Carroll, Haley](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: Nominee for District Court Judge
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 2:34:18 PM

I would like to nominate John Mercer for Lake County District court. I feel he will do amazing things for this county, being on the bench.

Thank you!

Haley Carroll
Lake County Justice Court
106 4th Ave E
Polson MT 59860
406-883-7259
haley.carroll@mt.gov

From: [Rick Schoening](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] support for Judge John Mercer
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 4:47:07 PM

Greetings,

I wish to express my support for John Mercer to continue as district judge for the 20th judicial district. I have observed John on the bench during many hearings. He is of sound mind and a real do'er. He comes to the courthouse five days a week and is willing to help out with any judicial work that needs to be done.

I have known John for nearly 40 years. He is a man of integrity and devoted to public service. I have worked with many of the previous district judges as a law enforcement officer. John is truly a standout. He understands this area like none of the other candidates. This is his hometown!!

Please re-appoint Judge Mercer for the remaining two year term.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honorable Rick Schoening
Lake County Justice of the Peace