

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: [Brooke Stroyke](#), Office of the Governor

Gov. Gianforte Appoints Molly Owen to Twentieth Judicial District Court

HELENA, Mont. – Governor Greg Gianforte today announced his appointment of Molly Owen to serve on the Twentieth Judicial District Court (Lake County and Sanders County). Owen fills the vacancy created by Twentieth Judicial District Judge James A. Manley’s retirement.

“Molly is an accomplished attorney who appreciates the court’s role in interpreting laws, not making them from the bench,” Gov. Gianforte said. “A strong supporter of drug treatment courts and maximizing efficiencies in the courtroom, Molly will serve the people of Lake and Sanders counties well.”

Owen has served as Deputy County Attorney for Lake County since 2015, and as St. Ignatius Town Attorney since 2017. Owen is a 2012 graduate of the Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law at Arizona State University.

On April 7, Governor Gianforte announced an advisory council of attorneys and community leaders in Lake and Sanders Counties to assist in identifying and reviewing qualified candidates to fill the district court judge vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District.

The governor concluded, “I thank the members of advisory council for volunteering their time to identify exceptional candidates to fill this vacancy and serve as their new district court judge.”

On March 7, the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Montana notified the governor of a vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District upon Judge Manley’s retirement on June 1, 2022.

On March 10, the governor began soliciting applications from and nominations of any lawyer in good standing with the qualifications set forth by law for holding the position of district court judge. The application period closed on April 11.

On April 12, the governor initiated the 30-day public comment period for the four applicants. Public comment concluded on May 11.

In May, the governor’s advisory council interviewed the four applicants and considered public comment, including letters of support and application materials. The advisory council forwarded two nominees to the governor on May 19, 2022.

The governor met with the top two candidates advanced by the advisory council.

Owen will be sworn in to serve on the Montana Twentieth Judicial District on June 20, 2022.

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