

**From:** [Jerry Collins](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ninth Judicial District  
**Date:** Friday, February 17, 2023 1:01:33 PM

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February 17, 2023

To Whom it May Concern

This letter is to support Gregory Bonilla for appointment to the Ninth Judicial District. Gregory was assigned Montana Association of Counties Property and Casualty Trust to represent Garfield County when the County was sued over road issue. I was the Commissioner who dealt with Gregory for the County. Gregory was easy to work with in answering all my questions and looking up information when required and keeping me informed. With Gregory's personality, I was comfortable communicating when I wanted an update on how the case was progressing. I feel with his experience and knowledge of the law he would be an excellent judge in the Ninth Judicial District.

-

/s/ Jerry Collins

Jerry Collins

Garfield County Commissioner

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

# THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

**JIM RICE**  
JUSTICE

JUDICIAL ASSISTANT: GWYN GREGOR



215 NORTH SANDERS  
PO BOX 203001  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-3001  
PHONE: 406.444.5573  
FAX: 406.444.3274  
[jrice@mt.gov](mailto:jrice@mt.gov)

February 16, 2023

Hannah Slusser  
Appointments Advisor, Governor's Office  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

Greetings:

It is my privilege to provide this letter of support for Greg Bonilla, an applicant for appointment as district judge in the Ninth Judicial District Court.

I have known Greg for many years. Greg practiced in Great Falls with the Cascade County Attorney's Office, and moved to Helena to practice with the Montana Association of Counties. He has extensive litigation experience, and I have observed both the exercise of his legal skills and his conduct before the Court. Greg is a solid legal thinker, always providing clear and cogent analyses, and an excellent advocate. He conducts himself prudently and is always courteous and respectful to the Court and other parties. I have seen him ignore sharp argument from a party opponent and respond by simply directing the Court's attention to the legal authority.

I also have known Greg outside of the legal environment and have observed him in a variety of circumstances. His demeanor in professional circumstances is matched by his personal conduct. He is by nature calm, gentle, and level-headed. He has been, and is, a dedicated and nurturing parent, including many years as a single parent. I believe Greg would exhibit an ideal judicial temperament, be considerate and compassionate to litigants, provide well-reasoned and supported legal decisions, and promote respect of the judicial process in the community. For these reasons, I urge careful consideration of Greg's application.

Thank you,

*Jim Rice*

Jim Rice  
Justice

Steven C. Haddon  
21 Lone Mountain Road  
Clancy, MT 59634  
(406) 439-7476  
ch46ef@gmail.com

February 27, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte  
Attn: Hannah Slusser  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

**Via electronic and U.S. Mail**

Re: Judiciary Nomination Letter of Support - Gregory Bonilla

Dear Governor Gianforte:

Gregory Bonilla has asked for my comment in support of his application to fill the District Court Judge vacancy in the Montana Ninth Judicial District Court. I am pleased to provide input.

I first met Mr. Bonilla shortly after starting as Chief Deputy Jefferson County Attorney in 2013. At the time, Mr. Bonilla was defending the county in a civil suit. Prior to coming to Jefferson County, a significant portion of my practice was devoted to civil defense work in state and federal courts. Based upon this experience, it was clear Mr. Bonilla was well versed in the law and procedural aspects of civil trial practice; both state and federal.

Over the years, as Chief Deputy, and as Jefferson County Attorney since December, 2015, I have worked with Mr. Bonilla on a number of lawsuits against the county. In all cases Mr. Bonilla's approach is one of dedication to his cases. Further, his devotion to his clients is top notch. He ensures the lines of communications are open and is prompt in responding to inquiries about cases. Moreover, Mr. Bonilla diligently defends cases and is not afraid to engage in motions practice and to take cases to trial when necessary. In short, Mr. Bonilla is a competent trial lawyer and his judgment and ethics are above reproach.

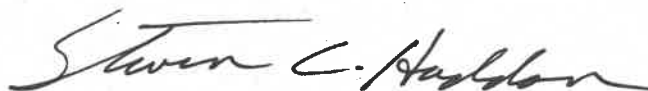
I have also worked with Mr. Bonilla in settlement conferences, depositions, and court proceedings. At all times, Mr. Bonilla displayed professionalism and candor toward the court, witnesses, opposing parties and their counsel, as well as other professionals, e.g. law enforcement personnel. He seeks to work toward resolution rather than foment confrontation. I have no doubt Mr. Bonilla will carry these same attributes into the role of District Court Judge.

Mr. Bonilla would make a fine addition to the bench. He possesses the intellect and skill necessary to competently carry out the duties of a Montana District Court Judge. Further, he has the demeanor and temperament for the role. It is with enthusiasm I write on his behalf and I ask

for your strongest consideration.

Thank you and please advise if I can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Steven C. Haddon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" being more prominent than the last name "Haddon".

Steven C. Haddon  
Jefferson County Attorney

# Smith Oblander Meade & Mitcham, PC

A Professional Corporation

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WWW SITE: <http://www.bigskylaw.com>

**Gregory G. Smith**  
**Stephanie A. Oblander**  
**Matthew T. Meade**  
**Kaitlyn J. Mitcham**

*Attorneys at Law*

March 1, 2023

Ms. Hannah Slusser  
Governor's Office  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

*VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY [nominatejudges@mt.gov]*

***Re: Ninth Judicial District Court Vacancy  
Candidate Gregory Bonilla***

Dear Ms. Slusser:

I write to strongly support the selection of Gregory Bonilla to fill the Ninth Judicial District Court vacancy created by Judge Robert G. Olson's impending retirement. I have known Mr. Bonilla many years, dating back to his private practice in Great Falls at Smith, Walsh, Clarke & Gregoire. He was admitted to the Montana bar in 1997, I was admitted in 1996. I have been involved in cases opposite Mr. Bonilla, and I have been involved in cases where we are co-counsel, working together representing the same client. Regardless of whether we are on opposite sides or working together, he is easy to work with, knowledgeable, diligent, efficient, responsive, pragmatic and always a pleasure to work with. It is rare to encounter a lawyer with such qualities manifested both personally and professionally in their practice.

As to professional qualifications, Mr. Bonilla has an extensive background handling a variety of complex matters. I am familiar with Mr. Bonilla's significant skill set and experience in private practice and working at Montana Association of Counties. His knowledge and command of the law in a broad range of areas is remarkable and will serve him well on the bench. He has a keen legal mind.

Moreover, Mr. Bonilla has exactly the right temperament and disposition for the bench. As practitioners we recognize that the job of being a district court judge is demanding and often thankless. Mr. Bonilla is pragmatic in his approach to cases and he treats all individuals and opposing counsel with patience, dignity and respect.

Finally, Mr. Bonilla has direct ties to the Shelby area. His ties and roots to one of the communities served by this position lend him valuable insight and a unique perspective. This is a factor that should be considered in the selection process, particularly because the

Ms. Hannah Slusser  
Re: Candidacy of Gregory Bonilla  
March 1, 2023  
Page 2

communities served by the position are rural, where neighbors know each other and are willing to lend a friendly helping hand. Mr. Bonilla reflects the character of these communities that he would be serving: a strong work ethic, integrity, humility and a willingness to serve others.

It is with much enthusiasm that I support Mr. Bonilla's candidacy for this position.

Sincerely,  
SMITH OBLANDER MEADE & MITCHAM, PC

/s/ Stephanie Oblander  
Stephanie A. Oblander

**From:** [faron Robison](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Gregory Bonilla for 9th Judicial District Judge Support Letter  
**Date:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 5:39:00 AM

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My name is Sherri Robison. I am supporting Greg as the next judge for our District. I live in Toole County and have known him since elementary school. Greg has always been a nice and leadership type of guy. I would feel confident that he would be your best choice as our next judge and he will have my vote!

Thank you,

Sherri Meech Robison

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android \[go.onelink.me\]](#)

**From:** [faron\\_robison](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Letter of support for Gregory Bonilla for ninth judicial district judge.  
**Date:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 3:17:51 AM

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My name is Faron Robison I grew up and have lived in Toole County most of my life, other than 4 years In the United States Navy. Greg and I went to school together from elementary thru high school in Shelby, I know him as a friend and team mate in sports. He was always steady and true and a person I trusted and still do. When it comes to judges I know it should not matter what party you lean to and with Greg I can say I don't even know or care. I feel he will do a great job if elected and has my support and vote. Thank you

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [Christy Clark](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Letter of support for Gregory Bonillia  
**Date:** Sunday, March 5, 2023 2:38:43 PM

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Dear Governor Gianforte and nominating committee,

Today I proudly submit my endorsement and complete confidence to you for appointing Greg Bonilla to the 9th Judicial District to serve in the capacity of judge. I first met Greg when we were in high school, he from Shelby and me from Choteau. We became acquainted through leadership activities and organizations that we were participants through out high school. We became quick friends as he has a very kind and empathetic personality, characteristics we should all value in a judge. Our lives moved in different directions and we became re-acquainted as we both reside in Helena now. Greg has expressed interest in returning to Shelby and serving his hometown where he got his start which I believe is an important point. Greg truly appreciates his roots and has an altruistic interest in serving the people he credits for shaping his successful future.

As you can see from Greg submissions he has a diverse legal background that I believe would serve the four rural counties that make up the 9th district very well. I believe it's important to have a broad background to effectively serve the members of the public as the region itself is very diverse. Greg's experience and skill set will be a great asset in that judicial capacity. Greg has practiced law in a rural area as well as served role in serving the counties. I believe each district has it's own "flavor" and Greg's personality, love for his hometown, and diverse background equate to a great judge for the ninth Judicial district.

Sincerely,

Christy Clark  
5618 Rainbow Dr  
Helena, MT 59602  
[christy\\_clark@ymail.com](mailto:christy_clark@ymail.com)  
406-590-8322



GOVERNOR GREG GIANFORTE  
DIRECTOR BRENDAN BEATTY

March 6, 2023

Hannah Slusser  
Appointments Advisor, Governor's Office  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Ninth Judicial District Court Vacancy – Candidate Gregory Bonilla

Dear Governor Gianforte:

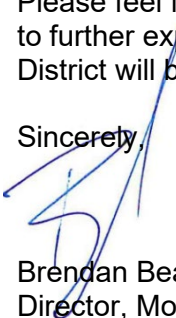
Please accept this letter as my unequivocal support of Gregory Bonilla in his bid to replace the retiring Honorable Judge Robert G. Olson on the Montana Ninth Judicial District Court. I have had the honor to call Mr. Bonilla my friend for our entire lives and, later in life, my colleague as practicing attorneys and members of the Montana Bar Association. I believe that Mr. Bonilla possesses the requisite experience, knowledge, and character to carry out the most difficult duties of a Montana District Court judge.

As you are aware, a Montana District Court judge adjudicates an incredibly wide variety of issues involving all aspects of law--from criminal to civil. Further, these judges every day see Montana citizens from all walks of life who are most often experiencing very difficult times. Mr. Bonilla's diverse legal experience which includes both civil and criminal practice, as well as a private practitioner and Managing Counsel for the Montana Association of Counties litigation group will provide him with the breadth of legal experience necessary to competently adjudicate the issues brought before him as District Court judge.

Aside from Mr. Bonilla's extensive, lengthy, and broad legal experience, his character stands out as the most important qualification for this position. Mr. Bonilla has always been a man with a level disposition, pragmatic view and one who treated everyone he encountered with respect. These attributes are maybe the most important character traits of a good judge. I am convinced that Mr. Bonilla's combination of legal experience and excellent character make him an exceptional candidate for the Ninth Judicial District Court vacancy.

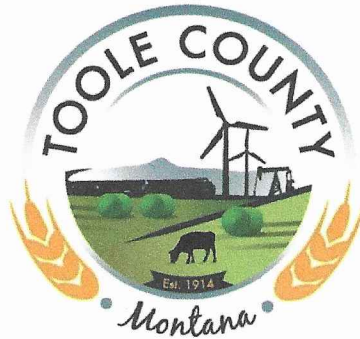
Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding Mr. Bonilla. I would be happy to further explain my support for this very fine candidate. The citizens in the Ninth Judicial District will be well served should Mr. Bonilla receive this appointment.

Sincerely,



Brendan Beatty  
Director, Montana Department of Revenue  
PO Box 5805  
Helena, MT 59604-5805

*Mary Ann Harwood* - Commission Chair  
*Terry Tomscheck* - Commissioner  
*Terry Kimmet* - Commissioner  
*Merle Raph* - County Attorney  
*Dan B. Whitted* - Coroner  
*Tyler Padilla* - Sheriff



*Debra Munson* - Clerk of Court  
*Treva Nelson* - Clerk & Recorder/  
Election Administrator  
*Donna Whitt* - Justice of the Peace  
*Boyd Jackson* - Treasurer/Assessor/  
Superintendent of Schools  
*Phyllis Robertson* - Public Administrator

226 1<sup>ST</sup> Street South  
Toole County Courthouse, Shelby, MT 59474  
406-424-8300 [www.toolecountymt.gov](http://www.toolecountymt.gov)


March 7, 2023


Governor Greg Gianforte  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Gianforte,

We as Toole County Commissioners are writing this letter to show our support for Mr. Gregory Bonilla to become the newly appointed Ninth Judicial District Court. We believe a district judge's legal knowledge and ability to issue consistent rulings is vital. He has represented a wide variety of clients over the past few decades which has prepared him with a strong foundation for this position. Mr. Bonilla would rely on his experience to guide him if he is selected as the next District Court Judge.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

  
Mary Ann Harwood  
Chairman

  
Terry Tomscheck  
Commissioner

  
Terry Kimmet  
Commissioner

Mitchell A. Young  
144 Wedgewood Lane  
Helena, MT 59601

March 7, 2023

Via Email [nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)

Governor Greg Gianforte  
c/o Hannah Slusser  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Ninth Judicial District Court Candidate Gregory Bonilla.

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am writing to recommend Gregory Bonilla for appointment as the Ninth Judicial District Court Judge. I believe Greg would be an outstanding addition to the Montana bench.

I first met Greg when I was the Lake County Attorney and he was representing Lake County in a civil suit. I was immediately impressed with his efforts to understand the factual nuances of the case and his ability to use those details to craft compelling legal arguments. His representation eventually led to a summary judgment ruling in favor of the County. While Greg's skill as an attorney was obvious, I was equally impressed with his attentiveness to his ethical obligations toward the County. Greg regularly and thoroughly provided updates on the progress of the case and any upcoming matters that required the County's input. His conduct inspired confidence that the County was receiving expert representation in the case.

In 2015 I joined the firm in which Greg is the managing partner. During our time working together, Greg has consistently displayed the qualities which would make him an excellent judge. His breadth of knowledge regarding both civil and criminal law is enormous, and he can identify relevant legal issues instantly. He is a tireless worker who handles a large caseload yet always completes his work in a timely manner. As managing partner, he handles the administrative requirements of the firm seemingly without effort and certainly without drama. Greg is eminently qualified to handle the legal and administrative requirements of a district court judge.

Finally, I believe Greg has the perfect temperament to serve as a district court judge. In contested matters he is always prepared to defend his position and does so firmly without being overbearing. He remains even-tempered in the face of provocation and retains his sense of humor under stress. Most importantly, he is always willing to look at all sides of an argument before making a decision. Any litigant appearing before Greg would be assured of a fair hearing.

To reiterate, I strongly support Greg's appointment as Ninth Judicial District Court Judge. Thank you for the opportunity to offer my input.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Young

**From:** [Richard Dunbar](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ninth Judicial District Appointment  
**Date:** Thursday, March 9, 2023 9:34:26 AM

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Governor Greg Gianforte

Governor Im writing in support of Greg Bonilla for the ninth judicial district. I have been a County Commissioner for 25 years and been on the Property and Liability Trust for at least 15 years and chair for about 10 years.

Greg has been doing Liability claims for MACO in house attorney firm for a number of years.

Greg took all those claims seriously whether large or small. all the facts were looked at objectively and looked at both sides of the claim to come to a settlement that was best for both parties. I had the opportunity to be in a settlement conference with him and see the professional way he approached the claim with the meterator.

Thanks for the opportunity to submit a letter of support for this appointment.

Richard Dunbar  
Phillips County Commissioner

March 10, 2023

**Applicant for 9th Judicial District Judgeship**

**Montana Governor Greg Gianforte**  
**Attn: Hannah Slusser, Appointments Advisor**  
**PO Box 203005**  
**Helena, Montana 59620-3005**

**Re: Judicial Nomination Letter of Support for Gregory Lee Bonilla**

**Dear Honorable Greg Gianforte, Governor of Montana and Judicial Nomination Committee –**

I am writing this letter in not only support of my brother-in-law, Gregory Lee Bonilla, for the appointment to the Judge position in the 9th Judicial District, to be vacated by the honorable Robert G. "Bob" Olson, but to also give you a bit of 'the rest of the story' regarding Greg.

First, you are in receipt of his application whereas his successful qualifications speak for themselves. Bar none, you won't find a better candidate to serve this position to ensure fair and impartial due process of law and justice for all who enter his courtroom. His passion for the law and Montana's constitution have driven his body of work for over 28 years. His mindset is of, and for, those who are before him. They have a voice and a time to be heard and he will acknowledge them with this right. His knowledge and depth of the justice system, his sense of reason and ability to apply the facts of law objectively as well as his stellar quality of both oral and written skills, is truly a judge for the 9th Judicial District.

But second, I have promised to tell you 'the rest of the story' of Greg, as I know him, is a decent, respectful and gentle-hearted man. Greg married my little sister Audra in the 90's, proceeded to traverse through law school and then moved back to Montana to Audra and my hometown, Fort Benton. Audra, an English major, was wanting to pursue a teaching career in the Fort Benton school district. They were blessed with a son and living a life in a small community, a gift they both wanted for their family as Greg too came from a small Montana town, Shelby. I won't get into details on how the Fort Benton Longhorns ruled over the Shelby Coyotes in the Northern A and B Divisions in our day as believe Greg would appreciate that I save that for a later time! As life would twist and turn, in 2007, Audra at the young age of 39 was diagnosed with Stage IV ovarian cancer. Our mother had also been diagnosed with the same disease at the age of 50, only to pass away two years later at 52 when Audra was just a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at the time, myself a senior in high school. We knew this was a harrowing diagnosis. Greg and Audra educated and prepared themselves, against all odds, for the ensuing and agonizing medical surgeries and chemotherapy treatments. You see, Audra's plight and fight wasn't just hers, it was also Greg's. They both had to go through this, they both had to fight, and they both had to get to the other side. Audra's cancer journey and trials were met with the greatest of love and support I have witnessed from a young husband. Greg never waived in his unselfish commitment to her care, continuous prayers through a shared faith, and his constant devotion to her needs that spanned through the following four years of her life before she passed in 2011.

While I am not fully versed in all of the qualities your judicial nomination commission is seeking for this particular judge position, I can attest and assure you that you will not find a better person to 'serve' the law and 'safeguard' the interests of all those who would enter his court. The counties of Toole, Teton, Glacier and Pondera will be well served by this former Shelby Coyote grad at the helm. God speed in your decision!

With great respect,

  
Wallis Morger Bryan

21 W Babcock, Bozeman, MT 59715



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# Montana Association of Counties

*Serving Montana Counties Since 1909*

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2715 SKYWAY DRIVE, SUITE A, HELENA, MT 59602

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[www.mtcounties.org](http://www.mtcounties.org)

Governor Greg Gianforte  
C/O Hannah Slusser  
Appointments, Advisor, Governor's Office

Please accept this letter as public comment in support of the application of Mr. Gregory Bonilla for consideration for appointment to the vacancy on the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court bench. As his application will demonstrate, Mr. Bonilla has dedicated his career to the practice of law in a manner that uniquely qualifies him for consideration of this important position.

As a Montana lawyer for the past 25 years, Mr. Bonilla has represented criminal defendants, prosecuted criminal cases, provided civil guidance, and litigated countless issues on behalf of Montana local governments. His well-rounded experience would be an incredible asset to the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District. His experience and dedication to the law will be clear in his application.

As the 'managing partner' in a law firm dedicated to representing Montana counties, Mr. Bonilla brings credible and practical experience deserving consideration. Given the unique relationship created by the Montana Association of Counties when we created a law firm with the sole purpose of defending MACo Property and Casualty Trust members in covered litigation, Mr. Bonilla has been a staunch advocate for the highest ethical standards in representing clients. His loyalty to his clients has never wavered, and his advocacy on their behalf has tested relationship between MACo, the Property and Casualty Trust, and member counties he represents. At the end of each day, his clients have always benefited from his counsel and as such, MACo and the Trust benefit as well.

Mr. Bonilla will do a fine job outlining his experience and qualifications in his application. What won't be so clear is the impact Mr. Bonilla has had on improving justice throughout Montana. His representation of public sector employers, public agencies, and public actions both by and through his formal representation and litigation experience AND his advice and counsel, has had a dramatic impact on public sector decision-makers. Mr. Bonilla is not afraid to tell elected officials that their actions are wrong when the situation warrants. But more than that, his representation is often done with an eye towards improving the systems and operations of government. His advocacy for improvements in operations, liability protection, open government, due process, and effective government in unmatched in his profession. You will find no better advocate for justice in the justice system than Gregory Bonilla.

I urge the committee's consideration of his application. While the Montana Association of Counties and each of our member counties have benefited from his legal work these past several years, it is time to share his experience with a larger audience. The Ninth Judicial District deserves an honorable and experienced legal practitioner and you have one in Gregory Bonilla.

Sincerely,

Eric Bryson  
MACo Executive Director

**From:** [val becker](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on 9th Judicial District Vacancy  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 8, 2023 10:59:55 PM

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March 8, 2023

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing this letter of support for Gregory Bonilla who is an applicant for your consideration to fill the Ninth Judicial District vacancy.

Greg and I have been friends since childhood and we both attended the Shelby School system and graduated in 1984. He has always been a dependable friend full of empathy and honesty, true honesty with genuine moral integrity. I thoroughly enjoyed Greg's and my conversations during middle/high school. Those conversations included many deep spiritual, moral, and thoughtful topics as well as the nonsensical ones a teen would engage in. His intelligence was never in doubt, nor was his loyalty and protection as a friend. He has always been easygoing with a calm demeanor.

Greg has exhibited these qualities throughout his lifetime. Every time our paths have crossed over the years, he has continued to show humor and his thoughtful and caring side. When he was working for the Cascade County Attorney's Office, I had asked him if he enjoyed the job. He told me that the toughest part was viewing the evidence from a meth house and seeing children's clothing or toys in the "homes". Greg was saddened that they would be exposed to the chemicals and standard of living found in such places, he has a heart for those unable to fend for themselves.

I honestly cannot think of a better person to fill the position of Ninth District Judge than Gregory Bonilla. He grew up in the area and knows the local people and culture. He has maintained a balanced, intelligent, sympathetic, and helpful nature through good and bad times. He has a strong desire to resolve issues in a legal and equitable manner. I feel that his past life experiences, personal characteristics and varied previous employment will all lead to him being a successful District Judge in the 9<sup>th</sup> District of Montana.

Sincerely,

Valenna Becker, DVM  
Shelby, Montana

# MATT LAW OFFICE, P.L.L.C.



310 East Main  
Cut Bank, Montana, 59427  
Phone: (406) 873-4833 Fax: (406) 873-0744  
email: [terrylm@mattlawoffice.com](mailto:terrylm@mattlawoffice.com)

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Terryl T. Matt, Esq  
Joseph F. Sherwood

March 10, 2023

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

Submitted Via Email: [nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)

RE: Ninth Judicial District Court Selection

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I write in support of the nomination of Greg Bonilla to serve as District Judge of the Ninth Judicial District Court for the counties of Glacier, Toole, Teton, and Pondera.

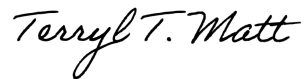
Mr. Bonilla's academic and professional experience make him exceptionally qualified to handle the job of District Court Judge. He knows the area and people of Shelby well, having graduated from Shelby High School in Toole County. He obtained his undergraduate degree in 1991 from the University of Montana and then graduated from University of California, Berkley with his law degree in 1996. His experience ranges from working for a law firm doing personal injury defense to a deputy in the Cascade County Attorney's Office to working for Montana Association of Counties (MACo) in its defense department. These positions give him both criminal and civil background in the practice of law—a background much needed if one is appointed to a judge position.

Mr. Bonilla's temperament also lends to his qualifications to serve as a judge. The Ninth Judicial District bar is a small bar of which I have been a member for longer than Mr. Bonilla has been practicing law. I, however, did not come to know him until about eight years ago. Since that time, I have worked with him on a regular basis. I have found him to have a deep commitment to the practice of the law, a strong personal sense of fairness, a way of assessing a problem calmly, and rationally allowing for a solution to the problem. His temperament is

always courteous and approachable. Conversation with him flows easily. A person of such temperament is a much needed and welcomed to our bar should he be selected for this position.

In summary, I believe that Gregory Bonilla would be a strong addition to the Ninth Judicial Court, and I support his application to fill the vacancy.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terryl T. Matt". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Terryl T. Matt

**From:** [Commissioner](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] 9th District Judge  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 14, 2023 12:51:44 PM

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Dear Advisory Council members,

We are fortunate to have 2 good candidates for the Ninth District Court judge. I could go through my complete repertoire but I would rather cut to the chase. I have spent a considerable amount of time researching both candidates and am impressed by both. Based on personal, professional, and peer reviews from over a dozen sources and receiving unanimous support for Mr. Bonilla, I heartily recommend Greg Bonilla for the judgeship. He will be a tremendous asset to our community!

If you have questions I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,

Jim Morren  
Pondera County Commissioner  
20 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SW  
Conrad, MT 59425  
406-271-4010

**From:** [Jason Rittal](#)  
**To:** [NominateJudges](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ninth Judicial District  
**Date:** Monday, March 13, 2023 10:16:34 AM

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March 13, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte  
C/O Hannah Slusser  
Appointments, Advisor, Governor's Office

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

It is my pleasure to write this personal letter of support for Gregory Bonilla for consideration as you review nominations for the Ninth Judicial District Court Judge. I have worked with Mr. Bonilla at the Montana Association of Counties (MACo) for the past 4.5 years. It is small part of his nearly 14 years at MACo which include 10 years as managing counsel. In his position he has been an integral part of leading the MACo defense team representing counties insured by our Property Casualty Trust. Cases of note during his time at MACo are *Renenger v. State and Jefferson County* and *Longsoldier (Stricker v. Blaine County and Hill County)*.

I am not an attorney, but here is my understanding of the cases and why they are a couple of important examples of the work Mr. Bonilla has been involved in.

In *Renenger*, Plaintiffs argued that the public duty doctrine (which is very important to local governments and the state) did not apply to law enforcement investigations. The public duty doctrine holds that where the government owes a duty to the whole public (like the duty to keep the peace), it does not owe any specific person a duty and, therefore, cannot be held liable for an alleged harm to one member of the public. If the public duty doctrine did not apply, law enforcement could get sued any time someone didn't like the results of a particular investigation or the prosecutor didn't obtain a conviction. That result would be timely and very, very costly. In *Renenger*, the public duty doctrine was preserved and the Supreme Court indicated that investigations were precisely the sorts of things the doctrine was meant to protect. That was a 2018 case.

Several aspects of the *Longsoldier* litigation have gone to the Supreme Court, but the issue Mr. Bonilla directly argued was the appropriate standard of review the Human Rights Commission (HRC) used in reviewing appeals of contested case hearings. The HRC were using the "clearly erroneous" standard as opposed to the far more restrictive "substantial evidence in the record" standard. The clearly erroneous standard made it a lot easier for the HRC to overturn a hearing examiner's trial verdict. The Supreme Court told them they can't use that standard anymore as a matter of law. That has resulted in a positive shift in the way the HRC does some of its business.

Again, it is my pleasure to submit these personal comments on behalf of Mr. Bonilla.

Jason Rittal

406-698-3255 cell

Jason Rittal  
Montana Association of Counties  
406-441-5464 direct  
406-698-3255 cell

Disclaimer: Please read this notice before using any materials or relying on any information in this e-mail. The Montana Association of Counties (MACo) provides education and information primarily as a general service to MACo members. The sender is not an attorney and MACo does not provide legal advice. The information provided should not be interpreted or used as a substitute for a legal opinion from your county attorney or otherwise retained and qualified legal counsel.

Maureen H. Lennon  
1459 Wilder Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59601

March 13, 2023

[nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)  
Governor Greg Gianforte  
Governor's Office  
PO Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

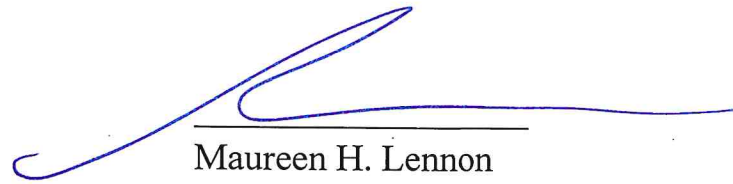
Dear Governor Gianforte:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts about Gregory and am honored to write this letter in support of Gregory Bonilla's appointment as a District Court Judge to the Montana Ninth Judicial District.

In addition to being a supportive and steadfast colleague, Gregory is a hard-working, conscientious, and always well-prepared lawyer. His legal arguments, both written and oral, are thoughtful, persuasive, and trustworthy. Gregory is extraordinarily bright, with a keen eye for detail and legal analysis. Thirteen years ago, he took on the task of managing our firm, a job requiring an entirely different set of skills – patience, fairness, thoughtfulness, strength and, at times, a healthy sense of humor. Gregory possesses all of these qualities and many others that make him a successful lawyer and a well-respected leader.

I spent the first twenty years of my career with Garlington, Lohn & Robinson, where I had the privilege to learn from and practice with some of the finest lawyers in Montana. My good fortune continued when, in 2009, I accepted an offer to be part of a new litigation firm, now County Litigation Group. Gregory and I started on the same day and have practiced law together ever since. It is with the utmost confidence that I say he is not only one of the best lawyers I have ever known, but also one of the best people I have ever known. Gregory's intellect, work ethic, commitment to excellence, even temperament, and dedication to the community he

will always call home are among the many qualities he brings to the bench. The people of the Ninth Judicial District, the Montana Bar, and the judiciary could not be better served.



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Maureen H. Lennon

MAXON R. DAVIS  
GREGORY J. HATLEY  
PAUL R. HAFFEMAN  
JOSEPH M. SULLIVAN (Of Counsel)  
STEPHANIE A. HOLLAR  
TRAVIS A. CUSHMAN  
DENNIS J. TIGHE (Retired)

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\*Also admitted to practice in Oregon & Washington

March 14, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte  
Attn: Hannah Slusser  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

Via email: [nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)

I am pleased to write this letter supporting Greg Bonilla for appointment as a District Court Judge for the Ninth Judicial District. I have known Greg for over twenty-five years. I met Greg when he was hired as an intern by my former law firm. Greg did such a great job that we hired him as an associate attorney, not once but twice!

After Greg moved to Helena and joined MACO, I had the opportunity to work with him in a case that involved several defendants. Greg knew the law and was well prepared which prompted an early and economical settlement of the claims that were asserted against his client.

Greg is thoughtful in his decision making. He does not jump to conclusions. Greg has learned how to balance the demands of his career with the demands of family life. Greg is genuinely interested in knowing how someone is doing personally and not just professionally. When Greg and I happen to see each other, the first several minutes of any conversation are spent updating each other on what our kids are up to.

Growing up in Shelby Greg is well suited to be a judge in the Ninth Judicial District.. I know he would take great pleasure in serving the community of Shelby where he grew up as well as the neighboring communities. In closing, Greg has the knowledge, experience and temperament to serve as a district court judge.

Sincerely,

DAVIS, HATLEY, HAFFEMAN & TIGHE, P.C.

By *Steph Hollar*  
Stephanie A. Hollar



March 13, 2023

Applicant for the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Judgeship

Montana Governor Greg Gianforte  
Attn: Hannah Slusser, Appointments Advisor  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, Montana 59620-3005

Re: Judicial Nomination Letter of Support for Gregory Lee Bonilla

To the Honorable Greg Gianforte, Governor of Montana, and Judicial Nomination Committee,

As a member of a third-generation landowner/ranching family Northwest of Choteau and within Teton County, I am respectfully submitting this letter of support on behalf of Gregory Lee Bonilla for the appointment to the Judgeship position in the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

While I cannot speak to Greg's jurisprudence, I have known Greg both personally and professionally for the last 35 years and have absolutely no compunction in putting forth my unwavering support for Greg and speaking directly to my firsthand knowledge of his honesty, integrity, and fairness.

On a personal level, I have always known Greg to have a keen interest in the people within his community. I have witnessed Greg demonstrate an innate ability to lead and treat all those he meets and interacts, with respect, compassion, and empathy.

I have also known Greg to possess strong moral courage and high degree of ethics, with a reputation for honesty, integrity, and fairness. Attributes I believe to be sorely missed in the world today.

On a professional level, I have witnessed Greg's strong work ethic and believe he would serve the 9<sup>th</sup> Judicial District with distinction and the ability to make sound, practical and timely judgements.

In the end, I would suggest that if we were to find ourselves in a position to be judged, we would all want to know that the person presiding over our case is someone known for impartiality, fairness and good judgement. It is my opinion that you will find those qualities and attributes in Greg.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Van K. Bryan, Architect/Landowner/Rancher

Mark F. Higgins  
387 Carol Drive  
Great Falls, MT 59405

March 14, 2023

Via Email: [nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)

Governor's Office

c/o Hannah Slusser

Helena, MT 59620

Re: Gregory Bonilla/Ninth Judicial District Court Judgeship

Dear Governor Gianforte:

As an attorney who has practiced in front of Montana judges for just over 40 years, it is my distinct honor to provide this letter in support of your appointment of Gregory Bonilla to fill the judicial vacancy in the Ninth Judicial District of this great state. I have appeared extensively in that very Court, and am certain that Greg possesses the intellect and the temperament to serve the same people around whom he grew up in his Shelby days. Gregory Bonilla, and the Bonilla family, are known quantities in the region, and we know from experience that such familiarity, and the attendant respect in the case of this fine family, are unique assets that can only help to assure a distinguished tenure on the bench.

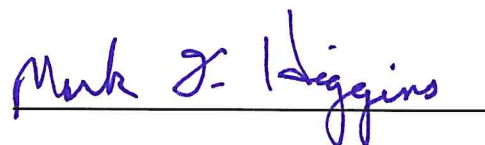
To complement an exceptional intellect, Greg possesses a perhaps equally-important diversity in his legal background. His experiential balance would be a huge asset for any Montana Judge, since in this State our District Court Judges face

caseloads replete with both criminal and civil matters, some routine but many others, exceptionally complex. Gregory Bonilla has the intellectual talent to tackle the complex and the humanity to sort out the more routine, which often involve child custody disagreements and other emotion-laden differences. He has been a prosecutor, he has defended the accused, he has represented injured Plaintiffs, and he has defended individuals, businesses and governmental entities sued for alleged civil wrongs, always remembering that his work deeply affects the lives of those for whom he has labored. That is extremely important, because a Judge holds the ultimate power to affect lives like almost no other person in our society.

His most recent experience at the Montana Association of Counties has provided Greg with essential office and people management skills and experience. By all accounts, he has been excellent. His grasp of the law, his ability to analyze and to write, are remarkable. Given all of this, the learning curve of a Judge Bonilla would be significantly reduced. If you add to this an insistence on basic fairness and common sense, and a large dose of moral character, you have in this applicant a person who almost surely will excel as a jurist. I can tell you firsthand that his work ethic is beyond question. Above all, you can expect a Judge who will treat everyone equally, regardless of station.

While I am approaching the end of my legal career, I do now and will in the future care deeply about the quality and fairness of Montana's legal system. Those attributes begin with Judges. Gregory Bonilla would, without a doubt, excel in this position. Thank you for considering this heartfelt endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark F. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a solid horizontal line.

Mark F. Higgins

# UGRIN ALEXANDER ZADICK, P.C.

SETH T. BONILLA  
JORDAN Y. CROSBY  
KEVIN C. MEEK  
ANDREW T. NEWCOMER

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ROGER T. WITT  
GARY M. ZADICK  
JAMES R. ZADICK

March 14, 2023

Judicial Nomination  
c/o Hannah Slusser  
Governor's Office  
[nominatejudges@mt.gov](mailto:nominatejudges@mt.gov)

**VIA EMAIL ONLY**

**RE: Ninth Judicial District Judge Position – Gregory Bonilla**

Dear Ms. Slusser:

My next-to-last day submission endorsing Greg Bonilla as the next Judge for the Ninth Judicial District in no way reflects my strong support for him. I have known Greg since his private practice days in Great Falls, more so during his time as a Cascade County Deputy Attorney, and more recently when I served as outside counsel for the Montana Association of Counties, Greg being in charge of its Legal Department.

Greg's eclectic body of practice and experience lends itself well to the matters he will see on his docket in Ninth Judicial District, including his home County of Toole. I am certain that Greg will manage his case load and courtroom in a prepared, fair, and confident manner, and with the same ease and courtesy that reflects his personality.

I ask that Greg be given the utmost consideration for the position and ultimately that his name be presented to the Governor for appointment.

Sincerely,



Roger T. Witt  
[rtw@uazh.com](mailto:rtw@uazh.com)

STATE OF MONTANA  
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

Robert J. Whelan  
District Judge  
Department No. II

Silver Bow County Courthouse  
155 West Granite Street  
Butte, Montana 59701  
(406) 497-6420  
Fax (406) 497-6358



March 14, 2023

Hannah Slusser  
Appointments Advisor, Governor's Office  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Reference for Greg Bonilla

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am honored to support Greg Bonilla for appointment to the Ninth Judicial District Court.

I have known Greg for over 35 years. We met while attending economic classes and while on staff at the University of Montana. It was there I first witnessed Greg's outstanding work ethic, keen intellect, and sense of personal responsibility as he worked to independently finance his education. We remained close as Greg went on to practice law and grow his family. Over the years, I watched with admiration as Greg supported his wife during a prolonged illness and as he raised their son following his wife's passing. Through his adversity, Greg demonstrated patience, humility, and compassion, traits that will serve him well as a district court judge.

Greg brings the same character and integrity he displays in his personal life to the legal profession. As an attorney, I had the opportunity to work opposite Greg. Greg is thorough, well-prepared, reasonable, and reasoned. He is respectful to all parties at all times. Greg possesses a calm demeanor and is tactful and courteous while firmly advocating for his clients. Greg has years of experience and a varied legal background. He is well-versed in respective areas of the law, and he has considerable litigation experience.

I hold Greg in highest personal and professional regard. He demonstrates appropriate objectivity, ideal personal conduct, judicial temperament, and a sincere wish to serve his hometown community. I strongly recommend Greg for appointment to the Montana Ninth Judicial Court.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. J. Whelan".

Robert J. Whelan  
District Court Judge