

LAW OFFICE OF
KIRSTEN MULL CORE, P.C.

ASPEN PROFESSIONAL CENTER
1700 WEST KOCH, SUITE 9
BOZEMAN, MONTANA 59715
Telephone: (406) 556-8485
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November 15, 2021

Governor's Office
Attn: Hannah Slusser
PO Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620
Via email

Dear Governor Gianforte and Members of the Judicial Selection Committee:

AI am pleased to write a letter in support of Benjamin Refling's efforts to seek the appointment to the District Court in Gallatin County.

As a practicing attorney in Gallatin County for over 20 years, I have had the opportunity to meet and observe many talented attorneys who have worked tirelessly for the Public Defender's Office. Ben has impressed me with his calm dedication to his clients, and thoughtful approach to the law. Intellectually, I have no doubt that Ben can preside over all matters. I have no doubt he will eagerly educate himself in matters with which he is less familiar and continue to broaden his knowledge on matters with which he is more familiar. At the same time, I also appreciate that the Public Defenders have heavy workloads, which require constant priority shifting and time management. Ben is adept at managing the challenges of his workload, which is a requirement for any District Court Judge in Montana but will be an increasing pressure for any Judge working in Gallatin County as our community grows.

Temperamentally, when confronted by individuals that would rattle more seasoned attorneys, Ben has shown a unique ability to calmly listen, consider and respond appropriately.

I thank you for your consideration of this applicant.

Sincerely,
Kirsten Mull Core

November 13, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte,

My name is Alex Jacobi. I have been a Public Defender in Bozeman for nearly 10 years. I have been Ben's colleague in our office for the last 5 years. I am writing in support of Mr. Refling for the bench of Montana's Eighteenth Judicial District Court.

Mr. Refling is a humble, charismatic, highly capable attorney that I have come to absolutely trust. Mr. Refling is an excellent choice for the next judge of Montana's Eighteenth Judicial District.

As a Public Defender, Mr. Refling carries an extremely high case load. Ever the professional, Mr. Refling remains diligent in providing excellent legal services to all his clients. He has an outstanding knowledge of the law and is constantly updating and improving his practice of the law. His time management and organizational skills, necessary for handling of his caseload, allow for his precise and comprehensive practice of the criminal law. Mr. Refling's strong work ethic is ever evident as he adroitly navigates Bozeman's frenetic legal system.

Mr. Refling is honest and charismatic. His confidence in a strong working knowledge of the law, support a charisma that allows Mr. Refling to work with a diverse and often difficult clientele. With a firm and complete understanding of his legal and professional duties, Mr. Refling works his practice with honesty and integrity.

Bozeman and our District Court will be well served by Mr. Refling. I enthusiastically endorse Mr. Refling as judge for the bench of Montana's Eighteenth Judicial District Court.

Thank you for your time in considering my endorsement for Benjamin Refling, for the position of Eighteenth Judicial District Court Judge.

Sincerely,



Alex Jacobi,
(406) 539-3527
ajacobi@mt.gov

Annie DeWolf
anniedewolf@gmail.com

November 12, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte:

Please accept this letter in support of Benjamin Refling's appointment for the judicial newly created vacancy in the Eighteenth Judicial District Court.

I have been a practicing attorney in Gallatin County at the Office of the State Public Defender for the past 12 years. I have worked with Ben since he started at the Office of the State Public Defender in 2017. I also worked with Ben when he interned at the Office in the summer of 2012. Ben and I have co-counseled trials and we have had mutual clients.

As a fellow public defender, Ben demonstrates an ethic of hard work by handling a high case load while understanding and advocating for the unique needs of each of his clients. As his application letter explains, Ben is committed to public service, a necessary quality for a judge in the 18th Judicial District Court.

Ben is intelligent and thoughtful; he is not quick to make rash decisions; he will thoroughly research and work through issues to reach a just decision. Even in the stress of the high volume, fast paced work at the Office of the State Public Defender, Ben has remained very calm and even keeled. Ben is the consummate professional and treats everyone with whom he interacts with dignity and respect – a trait that is often lost from the bench, but that is critical to being an effective judge.

I have seen Ben at work first-hand. He can critically review cases quickly and effectively. His motion practice is unparalleled. He is an effective communicator and has shown he can get the job done, even under pressured and stressful working environments. Ben is the right choice to be the next district court judge.

Sincerely,



Annie DeWolf

November 2, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Fax: (406) 444-4151
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte,

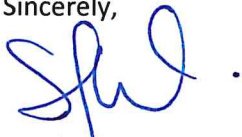
I am pleased to be writing this letter in support of Benjamin Refling for appointment to the new 18th Judicial District Court judge position.

I have had the good fortune to work with and professionally support Mr. Refling at the Office of the State Public Defender for approximately the last two and a half years. During my time working with Ben, I have witnessed his ability to sustain a very large case load, all while maintaining a professional and even-tempered demeanor. His ability to manage time, and his obvious commitment to fair and just resolutions for his clients is unparalleled. Ben's commitment to public service is apparent and shines through his work as a public defender.

Ben demonstrates respect and courtesy regardless of the situation. His time management skills and ability to work through convoluted legal issues make him an excellent candidate for the new district court judge position. Not only would Mr. Refling bring a heightened moral code and proficiency to the bench, but he would also bring his love for this community. Ben possesses the ideal traits for a judge. Ben is an investment for the 18th Judicial District.

Thank you for considering Benjamin Refling for the position of District Court Judge.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Wodnik
Legal Assistant
Office of the State Public Defender

November 12, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Fax: (406) 444-4151
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

RE: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am writing to support Benjamin Refling for the position of Eighteenth Judicial District Court Judge, Gallatin County, Montana.

Mr. Refling and I have been colleagues at the Montana State Public Defender's Office, Bozeman, Montana for the past two years. Since my time working alongside Mr. Refling, I have seen him demonstrate ethical and professional resolve of the utmost degree.

Furthermore, from his work, Mr. Refling has demonstrated the grit and grace to handle a demanding caseload, which bodes well as District Court Judge.

From my time spent with Mr. Refling, I have only seen him interact with the court, clients, and opposing counsel in a respectful manner. I believe Mr. Refling has the disposition that would allow him to apply the law in a fair and unbiased manner.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider Mr. Refling for the position of Eighteenth Judicial District Court Judge.

Sincerely,



George Isham
(406) 582-2460
George.Isham@mt.gov

Brigitte Menard-Carneal

(608)348-9729 ♦ bcarneal@mt.gov

November 2, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Fax: (406) 444-4151
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

RE: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing to express my support for Benjamin Refling for the position of District Court Judge in Gallatin County.

I have known Ben since 2012 and practiced law with him at the Office of the State Public Defender since 2017. From his regular appearances in the court, Ben is familiar with the pace and the work load of the court. The District Court regularly handles routine drug and alcohol related felony criminal matters, but also addresses more specialized legal issues, such as involuntary commitments to the state hospital, complex restitution questions with civil implications, and the implication of mental health on legal proceedings. Through his employment, Ben has been assigned to represent respondents in these diverse matters. Importantly, Ben's experience as a public defender has taught him how to analyze a case effectively and on an expedited timeline.

Ben's temperament is patient, earnest, and respectful, even in the most difficult of circumstances. I have watched him interact with criminal defendants, opposing counsel, and the court. Regardless of his audience, he demonstrates respect and courtesy. When faced with ethical dilemmas, Ben holds himself to a heightened code of ethics. Ben possesses the ideal judicial temperament.

I have been privileged to work closely with Ben and have benefited from his intellect. His prior employment representing businesses in complex civil litigation has given him a unique perspective when analyzing civil and criminal issues alike. His legal analyses are thoughtful, well researched, and objective.

Thank you for considering Benjamin Refling for the position of District Court Judge.

Sincerely,



Brigitte Menard-Carneal

November 10, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

RE: Benjamin Refling Letter of Support

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am writing this letter in support of Benjamin Refling as the next District Court Judge in the Eighteenth Judicial District.

From May of 2019 to May of 2021, I worked with Ben as an attorney in the public defender's office. Ben has an aptitude for legal research and legal writing. He is adept at navigating complex issues and at spotting critical minutiae in statutes. Equally important is Ben's calm demeanor: he is not easily ruffled. Whether he is participating in a tense hearing or speaking with an unruly client, Ben consistently shows respect and professionalism to those around him.

These skills and traits would serve the Eighteenth Judicial District well and make Ben an excellent choice for the open judicial position.

Sincerely,



Ellie Bastian
Assistant Federal Public Defender
Rapid City, South Dakota
ellie_bastian@fd.org

Elizabeth T. Musick
Karolina G. Tierney



P.O. Box 726
Bozeman, MT 59771
(406) 235-1456
www.mtlawpllc.com

November 10, 2021

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

Via Email to nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Benjamin Refling – 18th Judicial District Court Nomination

Governor Gianforte:

Please accept this letter of support for Benjamin Refling for the position of 18th Judicial District Court Judge.

I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Refling for several years at the Office of Public Defender. Mr. Refling is an intelligent and exemplary attorney with a strong moral compass and even demeanor. I witnessed his ability to quickly change his practice from civil to criminal defense, along with the significant increase in case load that comes with practice as a public defender. He handled all aspects of the job exceptionally.

Mr. Refling has appeared in justice courts, municipal courts, district courts, and bankruptcy courts throughout his career and is well-regarded and respected by his peers and judges. His experience at the public defender's office also provides him with a unique perspective and more case experience than many other attorneys of his age and years of practice.

Mr. Refling's combined civil and criminal experience would be an asset in this role. Additionally, he has knowledge regarding types of cases that District Court judges must preside over but most attorneys do not have experience with, such as involuntary commitments.

I highly support consideration of Mr. Refling for the position of 18th Judicial District Court Judge.

Sincerely,

Karolina Tierney
Musick & Tierney Law, PLLC

Slusser, Hannah

From: Veronica VandenBout <vvandenbout@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 12, 2021 10:40 AM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Benjamin Refling recommendation

One of the joys of my life has been watching Ben grow and become a caring, thoughtful young man. I am blessed to have known him from his birth near Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and through all the subsequent moves as his father was transferred from Marine duty stations.

Ben has taken to heart the ideals of service to others through Lutheran ministry work after college and by moving into a position with the Public Defenders office after returning to his hometown. He believes strongly in the principles of integrity, service to community, and the rule of law. Embodying the best traits from his U.S. Marine father and his attorney mother, Ben has dedicated himself to fair and impartial service to the law. His objectivity and even-handed judgment will be an asset to his community.

As a Marine veteran myself, I am proud to recommend Ben for Gallatin Count District Court Judge. His exemplary service is an endorsement in and of itself for nomination to the position of judge. Ben would certainly prove to be an asset to the bench.

Sincerely,

Veronica VandenBout

Sent from my iPad

101 Sunset Blvd
Bozeman MT 59715

November 9, 2021

Re: Candidacy of Benjamin Refling for the Gallatin County District Court Judge

Dear Honorable Members of the Governor's Judicial Advisory Council:

I wholeheartedly support my son's application for the new Gallatin District Court Judgeship.

Significantly, I employed Ben from 2013 to 2017. The employment gave me an unique opportunity to observe Ben's skills. Without reservation, I believe he is well qualified and will be committed to the fair, consistent, and objective application of the law to the facts in any proceeding before him as a district court judge. He will be consistent, decent, and thoughtful.

Prior to retiring after approximately 40 years of law practice, I had the opportunity to evaluate many attorneys. Among the young associates I supervised, I found Benjamin most particularly capable. Ben is able to understand the law's plain meaning and is adept at applying it to highly complex factual situations. His writing skills are superb.

Ben's commitment to public service led him to the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. It compelled him to leave a successful private practice. It calls him to volunteer for the Fort Ellis Fire Department. It compels him to seek this new judgeship.

The Advisory Council can make no better recommendation to the Governor than the endorsement of Ben's application for District Court Judge.

Thanking you in advance for your kind consideration of this letter, I remain

Very truly yours

/s/ Dorie Benesh Refling
406-570-3665

HODGES LAW GROUP PLLC

ATTORNEY AT LAW

Jessica Penkal Hodges

251 Edelweiss Drive, Ste 3A
Bozeman, Montana 59718

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www.jphodgeslaw.com

November 8, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena MT 59620

Via Email Only To:
nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Benjamin Refling – 18th Judicial District Judge Nomination

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am pleased to write this letter in support of Benjamin Refling for the district judge in Gallatin County. I have known Mr. Refling since 2013, and I believe his intelligence, demeanor and passion qualifies him for the position of District Judge.

Mr. Refling was employed as an associate at my firm, previously Refling Hodges Law Group PLLC, from mid-2013 until December 2016. During this time, our firm focused on civil litigation, primarily in the field of construction law. Mr. Refling handled matters in justice court, district court, federal court, and bankruptcy court.

Mr. Refling was adept at handling any project assigned to him. He was able to quickly educate himself in an area of law, analyze the facts of a case, and write a comprehensive but succinct and well-reasoned letter, brief, or memorandum on the topic. His intelligence and ability to quickly pick up on complicated areas of law allowed him to complete tasks efficiently.

A judge requires an even-tempered demeanor, which further qualifies Mr. Refling to be a judge. I observed that he was always able to remain calm under pressure. When given an in-court assignment, he invariably handled it with composure and skill, even as a new lawyer. In moments where more seasoned attorneys might become flustered, he was able to remain calm and coherent. I am sure his continued and frequent appearances in court as a public defender have allowed him to hone this talent even more. I never saw him become quickly angered, even when those around him acted less than professional.

However, just because Mr. Refling has the ability to remain calm under pressure, that is not to say he is not passionate. He advocated for every client fairly and with equal enthusiasm, whether it was arguing a breach of contract case in court or negotiating a contract for a business client. When he had an opportunity to join the Office of State Public Defender, he jumped at the chance

Governor Greg Gianforte

November 8, 2021

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because it fulfilled his desire to serve the public and to advocate for individuals most in need of representation without the means to afford it. His longevity at the Public Defenders' office and his desire to become a judge demonstrates his commitment to public service.

I highly recommend that Mr. Refling be considered for the new district judge in the Eighteenth Judicial District Court.

Thank you.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessica Penkal Hodges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jessica Penkal Hodges

hodges@jphodgeslaw.com

cc: Client (via email)

Sweet Grass County Justice of the Peace/ Big Timber City Judge

Jessie Connolly
P.O. Box 1432
Big Timber, MT 59011

Phone # (406) 932-5150
Fax # (406) 932-5433
e-mail: jconnolly2@mt.gov

Governor Gianforte
Judicial Advisory Committee

RE:
18th Judicial District Court Judge

October 27, 2021

Dear Governor and Judicial Advisory Committee,

I am excited to write in support of Ben Refling for appointment to the new 18th Judicial District Court judge position.

Mr. Refling served as a public defender in my limited jurisdiction courts for three years. After over 23 years on the bench, I have seen many attorneys come and go. Mr. Refling is an attorney that stands out. He is one of the most efficient and competent attorneys to practice in my courts. His professionalism and integrity far surpass is years.

Mr. Refling exemplifies the qualities of a good judge. He has an even temperament and a high- quality moral compass. He is clear, concise and thoughtful. His critical thinking skills are above average. His time management is superior.

Mr. Refling also respects and values the independence of the judiciary. He will serve as an impartial magistrate and will not be swayed by public clamor.

One of Mr. Refling's best judicial assets is his energy. He brings the drive and determination that district courts need. Mr. Refling will grow with the increasing demands on the judiciary and serve Gallatin County well for many years.

Ben Refling is an investment not only for the judiciary but for the state of Montana.

Sincerely,



Jessie Connolly
President Montana Magistrates' Association



The Law Office of Eric T. Oden
P.O. Box 1464
Livingston, MT 59047

October 25, 2021

Governor Greg Gianforte
Judicial Advisory Committee
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620

Sent via email to: nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Letter in Support of Benjamin Refling for Eighteenth Judicial District Judgeship

Dear Gov. Gianforte and Judicial Advisory Committee,

Please accept this letter in support of Benjamin Refling for your consideration of the applicants to the vacancy in the Eighteenth Judicial District Judgeship.

Mr. Refling has worked as a public defender for the State of Montana, serving Gallatin County, for a number of years. I had the good fortune to work with and professionally support him in that office as a paralegal for approximately two years. Having provided professional support to over a dozen attorneys in Southwest Montana over the years, I feel confident in stating that Mr. Refling stands out for his efficiency, objectivity, even temper and unimpeachable integrity.

On many occasions, I watched Mr. Refling remain calm and objective when interacting with clients and professional peers in difficult situations. I have observed Mr. Refling's care to remain truthful and objective in his speech and writing and his ability to avoid distraction in his professional judgment. I can personally attest to Mr. Refling's ability to stay organized and collected while managing a high-volume case load.

Based on the above, I strongly believe that Mr. Refling embodies the vital qualities of a District Court Judge and should be considered for the judgeship vacancy in the Eighteenth Judicial District Court in Gallatin County.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,



Sarah Oden
Paralegal