

Tad & Marilyn Dale

P.O. Box 683
Silver Star, MT 59751
Phone: 406-491-3944
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July 18, 2023

Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: Worker's Compensation Judge
Applicant: Thomas "Lee" Bruner

Dear Governor:

It was nice to visit with you briefly last week at the Montana Mining Annual Meeting banquet. Your message was spot-on for your support and encouragement of the mining and energy industries in Montana. Everyone that I have talked with were excited and positive about the direction you have laid out to facilitate the development of our great mineral wealth in this state.

I am reaching out to you today to express my support for Lee Bruner to be appointed Worker's Compensation Judge. I have known Lee for most of his life. His mother was a teacher in the Twin Bridges school system as was my mother. He comes from good stock as his mother grew up in a mining camp.

I have turned to Lee many times over the years for advice and consultation on issues including family wills, estate settlement, liability protection, and mine permitting compliance and resolution. He is also a go-to attorney for my brothers.

The qualities that I respect in Lee are honesty, thoughtfulness, promptness, his science background, broad experience, and positive demeanor.

His appointment to Worker's Compensation Judge would be a great asset to your administration. His sense of fairness and experience from both sides of an injury case and his moral judgement would render the best decision. Also, sometimes injury cases involve complex issues of velocity, positioning, material characteristics, and forces at work which his science background will allow him to comprehend.

I wholeheartedly and without reservation support Lee for this appointment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tad".

Tad Dale

From: [Nina Baucus](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Lee Bruner
Date: Monday, July 17, 2023 8:11:13 AM

We support the appointment of Lee Bruner as a judge for the Workermen's Compensation court.

We have not known Mr. Bruner in a legal capacity but have known him personally for many years. We have found him to be thoughtful in his comments and knowledgeable on many issues. While he has held several positions using legal expertise he has never discussed any details of his experiences that would violate any confidence he would have with clients. In fact, any legal issues he has talked about were only generic issues. We certainly appreciate that professional ethic in any lawyer we engage.

We believe Mr. Bruner would be a thoughtful and impartial judge for the Workmen's Compensation court and support his nomination for this position.

Respectfully,

John and Nina Baucus

Nina Baucus
nina@siebenranch.com
406-459-9470 (cell)

From: [Hertz, Greg](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Cc: [Hertz, Greg](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] WC Judge
Date: Saturday, July 15, 2023 6:17:23 AM

Dear Governor,

I am writing today to express my full support for the nomination of Lee Bruner as Workers' Compensation Judge.

Lee's extensive background in civil litigation, coupled with his diverse experiences beyond the legal sector, uniquely qualify him for the role of Workers' Compensation Judge. His wealth of knowledge and expertise will be invaluable in facilitating fair and just outcomes for the people of Montana.

Sincerely,

Senator Greg Hertz
Polson MT

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Emails to and from legislators involving legislative business may be subject to public disclosure under the [Right to Know](#) provision of the Montana Constitution and [Title 2, Chapter 6, part 10, MCA](#). This may include the sender, recipient, content, and attachments.

From: [John Davis](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]
Date: Tuesday, July 18, 2023 4:12:56 PM

Governor Gianforte,

I write in support of the application of Thomas Lee Bruner to serve as Montana's Workers' Compensation Judge. Over a period of approximately 19 years, I had the privilege of working with Lee on numerous legal matters, including complex medical malpractice and environmental law matters. In all of those experiences, Lee consistently demonstrated a very high level of legal skills and analytical abilities. Those characteristics, combined with his professionalism and calm temperament, will serve him well as a judge.

I strongly urge your appointment of Lee to serve as Montana's next Workers' Compensation Judge.

John Patrick Davis
Attorney, retired

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



WITH OFFICES IN DILLON AND HELENA

June 20th, 2023

The Honorable Greg Gianforte

P.O. Box 200801

Helena, MT 59620-0801

Dear Governor Gianforte:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Brown", is written over the text "Dear Governor Gianforte:".

I am both pleased and honored to write this letter of recommendation in support of Lee Bruner's application to serve as Montana's workers' compensation judge.

I have known Lee for many years both in a professional and personal capacity. I first became acquainted with Lee through our mutual participation in the Montana Wool Growers Association (MWGA) and through Southwest Montana oriented civic events. I have since worked with and litigated with Lee in a legal capacity for more than a decade.

My familiarity with Lee's legal and community work informs me that Lee is highly qualified to serve in this important position. Lee's legal work and background are perfectly aligned with the duties of this judgeship.

Lee's legal practice has consisted in part, of handling employment law personal injury claims. Further, similar to the duties of a judicial officer, Lee's legal work included engaging in alternative disputer resolution. He has also worked in a quasi-judicial capacity by both serving on the Montana Petroleum Tank Releasee Compensation Board and the Board of

Environmental Review. This latter experience will transfer over well to the judgeship position and will allow Lee to hit the ground running if selected.

In addition to his extensive and relevant legal experience, Lee has the disposition and demeanor required to succeed as a Montana judge. Lee has an excellent ability to connect with clients and opposing counsel and parties. He has a keen intellect; and Lee has a strong ability to quickly analyze complex matters related to insurance coverage, damages involving physical injury, and legal precedent. These analytical skills will serve the State well if Lee is selected to serve as Montana's Workers Compensation Judge.

Finally, Lee has two intangibles that makes him well-suited to serve in this position. Lee is a veteran, serving this country with distinction as a member of the U.S. Air Force. And Lee is a "Montanan's Montanan". What this means is that Lee carries with him, as a result of growing up in and around Montana agriculture, the values that make the Treasure State so great – the values of fair play, fair application of the law, and treating others with respect. If appointed, Lee will apply the law as written, and will continue to serve Montana's legal community credibly and honorably.

Again, I provide my highest personal and professional recommendation that Lee Bruner be selected to serve on Montana's Workers' Compensation Court.

Thank you for your time and for your own service to the State of Montana. I trust this missive finds you and Susan doing well.

Best,



James Brown, Esq

91 Burning Tree Lane
Butte, MT 59701
June 19, 2023

Gov. Greg Gianforte
c/o Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0810

Re: Thomas "Lee" Bruner Workers' Comp Court Judge Application

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

My friend and former law partner Lee Bruner is applying for the vacancy for the Montana Workers' Compensation judgeship. As the Poore, Roth & Robinson, P.C., Butte, equity owner who recommended our firm hire Lee -- an upcoming 1995 University of Montana Law School graduate -- as an associate who later became my partner, I can unequivocally state it was one of the best decisions I made during my law practice. I am honored and pleased to be able to submit a letter of recommendation on Lee's behalf.

What you see is what you get with Lee: decency, integrity, candor, competence, fairness, diligence, timeliness, and humanity. Lee is the quintessential straight-shooter Montanan who grew up working on the family ranch, served in the U.S. Air Force, completed his BS in physics at MSU (with a few side adventures along the way), and eventually found his way to Montana's premiere law school. He has proved time and time again that practicing law can be and should be an opportunity which transcends merely power and money, that is, it is the opportunity to do what is right. Lee is someone you can trust. However, Lee and wife Pollann's greatest achievement, though, is that they have successfully raised three sons who are now men who embrace these same attributes and values.

Lee's broad experiences in the real and the legal worlds will impact how he serves as the Worker's Comp Judge. Besides his active legal practice before Montana

Courts, he has appeared before or worked with several of Montana's administrative entities, e.g., Public Service Commission, Petroleum Tank Release Compensation Board, Medical Legal Panel, Board of Personnel Appeals, and Human Right Commission. My primary legal work experiences with Lee were medical malpractice/professional liability cases which involved, among other things, an understanding of human physiology and anatomy as impacted by injuries, environmental exposures, and disease processes. Lee's grasp of the medical issues with which he will be dealing is substantial and experientially based.

"Justice delayed is justice denied" is not a specious cliché. While the practice of law is fundamentally applying the facts of the case to the applicable law, the speed and fairness of the process followed to reach that point are equally important. Treating those appearing before the Workers' Compensation Court with equal respect and courtesy while keeping the process moving in a timely manner is essential for a well-run court. Lee knows how to keep litigation moving forward. While in charge, he is respectful. His understanding of the administrative component of judicial fairness is well established based both upon his legal practice and serving as a court administrator.

Lee gets the importance of fair, reliable, and expeditious rules of procedure. When you are in the trenches of a litigation practice, you learn quickly upon whom you can rely to do the right thing. Lee embodies the foregoing.

Finally, for full disclosure, although I retired from the practice of law ten years ago this November (but who's counting), Lee is still my friend who still makes me proud to be have practiced law. There are a finite number of loyal people in life whom you can respect and trust about those things which really matter. Appointing Lee as the next Workers' Compensation Court judge falls into that category. Lee is one of those few people who will make you proud, too. If you wish any additional information regarding Lee, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,


Robert C. Brown

Charlie K. Smith
65 East Broadway, Suite 400
Butte, MT 59701
Telephone – 406-221-2438
Facsimile – 406-782-2702
cksmith@crowleyfleck.com

June 19, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

RE: *Recommendation of Lee Bruner for Work Comp Judge*

Dear Governor Gianforte:

My name is Charlie Smith and I am a partner at Crowley Fleck PLLP. I work out of the Butte office and practice almost exclusively before the MT Work Comp Court (WCC). Without crunching the numbers, I would guess our firm participates in the vast majority of the WCC settlements as reported in the Montana Law Week digest, and I seem to have at least one reported WCC settlement each week.

It is one of the greatest honors of my career to write you this letter of recommendation for Lee Bruner to be appointed as the next WCC Judge. I have known Lee for over 20 years to be a kind, highly intelligent, and hard-working attorney. Lee and I were partners together at our prior law firm in Butte—as small business owners in Montana—and we became lifelong friends.

Lee was my mentor. For many years, we practiced complicated medical malpractice cases together, and took cases to trial. It was some of the highest-stakes tort litigation in Montana but I will never forget Lee's patience with me and his cool and calm demeanor before the jury. He has the brains to go along with the temperament needed to be a judge and he would do a wonderful job.

Lee is Montana through and through. He graduated from a private high school in Montana, went to college in Montana, is ex-military, and as loyal as they come. Lee grew up on a large ranch/farm which his family still owns and operates every day, all day. The ranch directly supports multiple, local families and its produce is sent throughout the state. My family and I love to hunt on Lee's ranch; he grants permission to all Montana's citizens. We chase elk on the mountain property in the mornings, and whitey's in the river bottom in the afternoons. And the fishing! Even though we are usually coming/going at extreme hours in the morning/night, Lee always is working hard on the ranch, with a smile.

June 19, 2023

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Whether it is studying physics or medical malpractice, I know Lee will *master* Work Comp and in short order. Although he may not have as much direct experience in Work Comp, with his tort experience and background, there is no doubt in my mind he will succeed. Lee has already submerged himself into the WCC world and I know him to be a quick study.

I, too, made the transition to Work Comp. Like everyone. Most lawyers do not set out to be in Work Comp unless they are a legacy child. Instead, the industry usually finds us as Work Comp is the best kept secret in the last best place. Montana's Work Comp Act is relatively short but very intricate. We have a small, tightknit legal bar that reaches all around the state. I am friends with and know all the other MT Work Comp attorneys.

My prior experience and background in medical malpractice with Lee was critical to my transition into Work Comp and it served me well. Knowing how to read and understand medical records seems like half the battle in this industry and Lee already has strong grasp of medicine, deposing doctors, and analyzing medical records. He will hit the ground running.

I believe Lee will make an excellent WCC Judge and would gladly discuss his nomination in more detail if needed.

Sincerely,

CROWLEY FLECK PLLP



Charlie K. Smith

Slusser, Hannah

From: Carey Matovich <cmatovich@MKHATTORNEYS.COM>
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2023 1:55 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Workers Compensation Judge for Montana

To whom it may concern:

I understand that Lee Bruner has submitted his name for consideration as the next Workers Compensation Judge for Montana. I have known Lee for a long period of time and had several cases in litigation with him over the years. He has always been well prepared, skillful, and adept at representing his clients. His temperament is balanced, and I believe he would be an excellent choice for the position. I would be pleased to discuss his consideration in more detail should you need.

Thank you.

Carey Matovich
Matovich, Keller & Huso, PC
Billings, Montana
(406) 252-5500

Slusser, Hannah

From: Randy Dix <Randy@randydixlaw.com>
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2023 6:26 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Lee Bruner

Governor Gianforte
Governor's Office, State of Montana
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte:

Attorney Lee Bruner has asked for my support regarding his application to become the Workers Compensation Judge for Montana.

I have been professionally acquainted with Lee and other members of the Poore, Roth & Robinson Law Firm in Butte for several decades. In my capacity representing victims of medical negligence, I had numerous interactions with Lee when he served as defense counsel on behalf of involved healthcare providers.

While we clearly have disparate political and ideological perspectives, I always enjoyed working with Lee as he was unquestionably competent, eminently practical in assessing risk for his clients, refreshingly honest in his willingness to share his appraisal of a given matter and yet more than willing to accept the challenge when and if he believed he had viable defenses to assert.

In short, it was a pleasure to work in a collaborative way with Lee and I am confident that he will serve the public very well in functioning as a judge in the workers' compensation system. Lee understands the importance of not only fair but timely decisions. He knew, as only a seasoned litigator could, that minimizing the trauma of litigation to all parties is of utmost concern.

I am honored to have been asked to support Lee in this endeavor. Your serious consideration of his candidacy will be appreciated by the Bar and the public.

Respectfully,

Randy K. Dix
316 Fuller Avenue

Helena, MT 59601
randy@randydixlaw.com

From: [Usher, Barry](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Judge Nomination
Date: Friday, July 14, 2023 8:02:49 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Governor,

I am writing today to endorse the nomination of Lee Bruner as Workers' Compensation Judge. Lee's exceptional qualifications, combined with his unwavering dedication to fairness and justice, make him the ideal candidate for this important position.

Lee possesses a remarkable breadth of legal experience, which, when combined with his multifaceted background outside the legal sphere, positions him uniquely for the Workers' Compensation Judge role. With his comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of civil litigation and a diverse range of experiences, Lee brings an unparalleled perspective to the table.

Sincerely,
Senator Barry Usher

Barry M. Usher
Senator
Montana Senate District 20
(406) 252-2888 x1116
Barry.Usher@legmt.gov



Emails to and from legislators involving legislative business may be subject to public disclosure under the [Right to Know](#) provision of the Montana Constitution and [Title 2, Chapter 6, part 10, MCA](#). This may include the sender, recipient, content, and attachments.

From: [Samm Cox](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Workers Compensation Judge --- Thomas "Lee" Bruner
Date: Thursday, July 13, 2023 2:18:19 PM

The Honorable Greg Gianforte
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

I am excited about the opportunity to write a letter of recommendation for Thomas Lee Bruner for the vacant position of Workers Compensation Judge. I have had the privilege of knowing "Lee" since we attended the University of Montana School of Law years ago. We have maintained a consistent relationship as friends and colleagues. It has been my pleasure to watch him grow throughout his career as an attorney.

Lee definitely possesses the qualities which would make him a great arbiter. He has a breadth of professional and personal experience which he can use as a foundation for impactful decisions. He has a passion for the law and a thirst for continued learning and application. He has a perfect temperament for the position and is not one to make hasty and unsupported decisions. All in all I could not think of a better candidate.

The above notwithstanding and intended with full sincerity, as I mentioned above he is and has been my friend for many years. I am just glad once you see his overwhelming qualifications and you and appoint him to the position that I am semi-retired and therefore the chances of me having to call him "Your Honor" are very miniscule.

In all seriousness I do hope you give him high consideration for the position. Thanks,

Samm Cox
Former Chief Deputy County Attorney
Butte-Silver Bow
Current Assistant Professor, Montana Technological University



DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Benjamin C. Burns
Frank C. Crowley, MS
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Cynthia D. Brooks
Mark A. Thieszen

July 12, 2023

Via Email nominatejudges@mt.gov

Dear Governor Gianforte:

This letter is in support of Thomas “Lee” Bruner’s application for the Workers’ Compensation Judge position. I’ve had the pleasure of working with Lee over the years and have been very impressed with various aspects of his personal and professional life. Throughout the 14 years I’ve interacted with him, he has exhibited a consistency and level-headedness that I wish was far more prevalent among Montana attorneys. In matters where he supervised me as a younger attorney, he demonstrated and guided me in treating all participants in the legal system with respect and cordiality. That respectful and cordial approach is also present in his personal life as he deals with friends and family in sometimes stressful situations that can arise while working on a ranch.

Another unique attribute that Lee excels at beyond any other attorney I’ve dealt with is his ability to quickly discern what the core issue or issues are in any given scenario. Many times while we worked at the same firm I had been working a case for months and would just begin describing the matter to Lee and he would succinctly identify the key issues and interests in a clear and concise manner that I have not experienced with other attorneys. He would also carefully consider all facts and details where appropriate, but I have always been amazed at his ability to see through the extraneous facts and identify the core dispositive issues of a case.

Finally, although I could go on and on about Lee, it is worth noting that Lee is an incredibly quick study. Expert witnesses we hired in various fields were always impressed by how quickly Lee understood new, complex information and could appropriately apply it to a given situation. I am confident that Lee would quickly learn the nuances of Workers’ Compensation law.

In my opinion, Lee is an excellent choice for this position. He would be a fair judge; capable of reaching timely decisions and articulating them clearly. Montana, and more specifically Montanans, would benefit greatly from Lee being appointed to this position.

Regards,

Sincerely,

Mark A. Thieszen
Attorney
9208.000 - PL 390927

From: [Debbie Talcott](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendation of Lee Bruner for Workers Compensation Judge
Date: Saturday, July 22, 2023 3:36:03 PM

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing to recommend Lee Bruner for Workers Compensation Judge.

I have known Lee Bruner for 10 years as a colleague in Montana Wool Growers, and have nothing but positive things to say. There is no doubt in my mind that Lee will be an excellent addition to Workers Compensation work force.

I have always known Lee Bruner to be of sound character, honest, professional, and a great sense of work ethic. It is my honor to recommend Lee Bruner for this position.

Sincerely,

Duane Talcott President of Montana Wool Growers
debtalcott@yahoo.com
cell (406)698-6162

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad \[mail.onelink.me\]](#)

From: [Mike Clague](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Lee Bruner: Workers' Compensation Judge Letter of Recommendation
Date: Wednesday, July 19, 2023 8:08:37 PM

Governor Gianforte:

We write to strongly recommend our friend and colleague, Lee Bruner, as the next Montana Workers' Compensation Judge. Lee's exceptional legal skills and Montana work ethic lay the foundation for him to serve the people of Montana with dedication and balanced judgment.

We have known Lee as a friend and colleague since we attended law school at the University of Montana 30 years ago. Even as a law student, Lee's grasp of legal concepts and complex legal principles was evident. As a partner at the Poore, Roth and Robins law firm in Butte, Montana, he continued to develop this professional skill as he handled complex medical malpractice cases. Lee's transition from private legal practice to working in state government is also an asset as Workers' Compensation Judge. Lee understands the impact that the Worker's compensation law has on both workers and employers and he has the temperament to be a fair judge.

In addition to Lee's exceptional legal skills, he has a breadth of work experience including serving in the U.S. Air Force and working on his family ranch throughout his lifetime. This depth of work experience allows him to understand the importance of the workers' compensation system and the effect that system has on working persons and businesses. As a judge, he will show fairness to workers and employers in the system.

Finally, Lee has worked with numerous nonprofits over the years. Most recently he serves as President of the Friends of the Butte-Silver Bow Veterans Treatment Court, Inc. Lee is dedicated to supporting this nonprofit's mission to organize community support for veterans transitioning back to civilian life including justice-involved veterans.

We enthusiastically support Lee for the position of Workers' Compensation Judge. He has the strength of character and the legal skills to be a great judge for the people of Montana.

Sincerely,

Mike Clague & Susanne Clague
P.O. Box 3182
Butte, Montana 59702

July 20, 2023

Sent via Email only

Gov. Greg Gianforte
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
nominatejudges@mt.gov

RE: Lee Bruner for Montana Workers Compensation Judge

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

I write in support of Lee Bruner being nominated for the Workers Compensation Judge. I have known Lee since we were in law school together in the early 90s. He has always been a great friend and a solid conservative legal and political thinker. We have worked on many projects over the years, and I admire and respect him immensely.

Lee is obviously an astute legal mind. But he also has the perspective of a Montanan with a rural, agricultural background. He knows what it means to work with his hands. He will bring the common-sense perspective of a farmer/rancher to his work as a judge. He has a tremendous work ethic, which I got to observe firsthand when I supported him in his run against Tim Fox for the Republican nomination for Montana Attorney General. He crisscrossed the entire state dozens of times in his pickup truck, attending events and laying out his visions as “Montana’s lawyer.” To call him “tireless” would be a sad understatement of Lee’s capacity for grinding it out.

Finally, again, he has a very conservative legal mind. He is keenly attuned to the proper role of a jurist in applying the law, as written. You can count on him not to legislate from the bench, and to rely solely on statutes, regulations and case

Gov. Greg Gianforte

July 20, 2023

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precedent as his reference points. I am confident he will adhere to this principle as faithfully as any lawyer I have ever met.

Lee's candidacy is a great opportunity for the Worker's Compensation Court and the state of Montana. I urge you to select him as our next Worker's Compensation Judge. It will be a credit to your administration as another brilliant appointment.

Sincerely,

RHOADES & ERICKSON, PLLC

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Quentin M. Rhoades", is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Quentin M. Rhoades, Esq.

QMR/af



DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Benjamin C. Burns
Frank C. Crowley, MS
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Cynthia D. Brooks
Mark A. Thieszen

July 20, 2023

Via Email nominatejudges@mt.gov

RE: Workers' Compensation Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am honored to offer this letter in support of Lee Bruner's application to be the next Workers' Compensation Judge for the State of Montana. I have known Lee for many years, and there is no question that he is a great fit for the position. Lee is a skilled litigator who has achieved remarkable results for his clients in numerous cases. Moreover, Lee has the unique temperament and high ethical standards that are necessary as a judge.

As noted in Lee's application, he understands both sides of the cases that come before the Workers' Compensation Court. Lee has worked in some of most dangerous jobs in Montana, including underground mining, construction, trucking, and ranching, and has suffered a workplace injury. Thus, he understands the need for a robust workers' compensation insurance program to take care of injured workers and to facilitate a speedy return to work. On the other hand, Lee is the owner of a small family farming and ranching business in Jefferson County. Thus, he understands the need to ensure that only legitimate claims are paid in order to keep workers' compensation insurance premiums reasonable.

Sincerely,

Jack G. Connors
Shareholder

9206.000 - PL 391240



DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Benjamin C. Burns
Frank C. Crowley, MS
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Cynthia D. Brooks
Mark A. Thieszen

July 20, 2023

Via Email nominatejudges@mt.gov

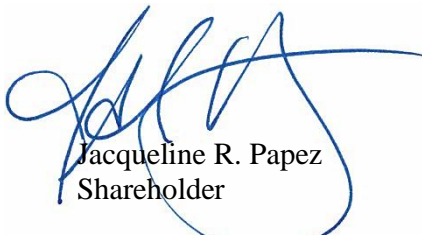
Dear Governor Gianforte:

Please accept this letter as my wholehearted endorsement of Lee Bruner in support of his application to be the next Workers' Compensation Judge for the State of Montana. I have had the good fortune to work under and with Lee over many years and, based on this, I believe he would be an outstanding choice for this position. Lee's extensive litigation experience has prepared him well to analyze myriad legal issues and would of course serve him well in this position. Moreover, his extensive knowledge of civil and administrative procedure would make him an excellent fit for the position.

However, for me, what sets Lee apart as a legal practitioner is the manner with which he conducts himself. I can honestly say I have never met another attorney who so without fail treats all persons he encounters—whether his subordinates, his superiors, his clients, opposing parties, or opposing counsel—with the utmost respect, collegiality, and dignity, even in the face of difficult, and sometimes hostile, circumstances. I have no doubt that this skillset would make him a tremendous asset to the State and the Workers' Compensation Court.

Thank you for considering Lee for this position. If chosen, I have the utmost confidence he will serve the State of Montana with dedication and distinction. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline R. Papez
Shareholder

9208.000 - PL 391249



*Mediation
Facilitation*

*James L. Jaffe, J.D.
Environmental Services
327 Fox Run Road
Findlay, Ohio 45840
Cell: 406-498-7569
Email: ajaffe8@Roadrunner.com*

*Co-ordination
Instruction*

July 22, 2023

The Honorable Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana
P. O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: Thomas Lee Bruner
Judicial Nomination
Workers' Compensation Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte:

It is my pleasure, and privilege, to recommend Lee Bruner for the position of Workers Compensation Judge.

In the summer of 1994, I met Lee when a friend of his, Alan Paine, was working for my law firm and asked if a friend of his, Lee Bruner, could work for us as a summer intern. Since Lee and I are both Bobcats, I said of course. This led to a 29-year friendship.

Over the years I have stayed at Lee's house, and the family ranch, which has given me the opportunity to see how Lee interacts as a husband, dad, and son, as well as a good friend. I have had the opportunity to discuss all sorts of issues with Lee and watch him mature as a lawyer. When Lee ran for office in 2008, I spent significant time with him campaigning around the state. This gave us lots of what is called "windshield time" which, in turn, allowed for significant discussions of many issues.

I freely admit that Lee is significantly more conservative than I am, so mutual friends asked me why was I supporting Lee for statewide office? The answer was simple, Lee is one of the most

honorable men I have ever met. Regardless of the demands put on Lee by his practice, or family, or running the family ranch, he always rose to the occasion. He always made time for his family, regardless of what was asked of him, nor did he give less than full attention to his clients. How he found the time, patience, and equilibrium, to balance all that was asked of him is beyond me. His word is his bond, and I have never seen Lee "take a shortcut" in professional, business, or personal matters.

Additionally, no matter your point of view, Lee actually listens to what you have to say. Then, when it is his turn to talk, he always has cogent reasons, logically explained for his point of view. Regardless of whether or not you agree with Lee, you always end up respecting his point of view.

Therefore, to reiterate, it is my distinct pleasure, and privilege to recommend Lee Bruner for the position of Workers Compensation Judge.

Respectfully yours,


James L. Jaffe



DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Benjamin C. Burns
Frank C. Crowley, MS
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Cynthia D. Brooks
Mark A. Thieszen

July 21, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

RE: Lee Bruner's Nomination for Workers' Compensation Judge

Governor Gianforte,

I write to submit my full-throated support for Lee Bruner's application to be the State's Workers' Compensation Judge. I have known Lee since we attended Montana Tech in Butte together over forty years ago. We have practiced law as opposing counsel, and later as members of the same firm for over thirty years. I have known Lee longer than almost anyone still alive and I am sure you will not find a better candidate to be Montana's Workers' Compensation Judge.

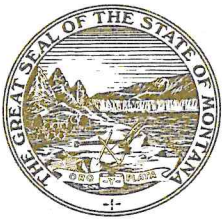
Lee is that rare individual who is blessed with both a rigorous intellect and good old common sense. I am always impressed with his knowledge and ability to see to the heart of any legal dispute, yet have the wisdom to know which legal positions to press and which are counterproductive. I am sure you will find his legal skills and knowledge a credit to my profession and well suited for the bench.

But perhaps Lee's best qualification for this honor is his outstanding personal character. Over and over these last forty years, I have seen Lee exhibit the high personal and professional character all Montanans deserve from their judicial officials. As Montana's Workers' Compensation Judge, Lee will bring honor to the position and help increase the citizen's confidence in its judiciary.

Years from now, when you look back upon all the appointments you have made as Governor, I know Lee will rank amongst those which you are most proud.

Sincerely,

R. Allan Payne



Bowen Greenwood
CLERK

Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court

P.O. Box 203003
Helena, MT 59620-3003
406-444-3858 phone
406-444-5705 fax

Governor Greg Gianforte
Attn: Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
VIA E-MAIL TO: nominatejudges@mt.gov

It's an honor to comment in favor of Lee Bruner's nomination to be Chief Judge of the Workers' Compensation Court.

Lee currently works with me in the office of the Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court. He's the deputy clerk there. When you look at Lee's record, it's easy to see his extraordinary qualifications as an attorney. Not everyone understands the depth of Lee's commitment to public service, though. When I was elected Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court, I became the first new person to hold this office in 30 years. Obviously, that represented a major transition. Even though his worth in the private sector is many times greater than we could pay here, Lee agreed to come work as Deputy Clerk because that transition needed to go smoothly.

Lee is a Montanan's Montanan. He's a true working farmer, always balancing his work schedule with things like cutting hay and lambing. Despite that, he never fails to get things done ahead of schedule and to a superlative standard of quality. Lee is an Air Force veteran, and one of his sons is in the Montana National Guard. Others are enrolled at Montana State University. A few years ago he also took in a foster son. He's a hunter and enjoys shooting and firearms.

We will feel his loss deeply in the Clerk's office. But we have an excellent successor available and the purpose for which he came has largely been addressed. The transition went smoothly, and the Supreme Court Clerk's office is a well-oiled machine. The credit for that goes entirely to my extraordinary coworkers and to Lee. It's time to let him rise to the higher level of responsibility of which he is much more than just capable.

Governor, it is an honor to recommend him to you. In a just world, it would be me who needed Lee Bruner's recommendation to advance. Since he needs mine, he has it wholeheartedly and with deep enthusiasm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Bowen Greenwood", written over a horizontal line.

Bowen Greenwood
Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court

From: [Robert Dwyer](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Lee Bruner - Workers' Compensation Judge recommendation
Date: Friday, July 28, 2023 3:52:11 PM

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I write in strong support of the appointment of Lee Bruner to the Workers' Compensation Judge position.

My wife and I have known Lee on both a personal and professional basis for nearly twenty years. Professionally, Lee is a highly competent and thoughtful attorney. Personally, he is a dedicated husband and father. He is a rational, reasoned individual whose thoughtful demeanor and application of the law is precisely what is called for in a judge.

Lee is a man of integrity and precisely the individual most qualified, in my opinion, to be appointed to fill the current Workers' Compensation Judge vacancy. I strongly endorse and encourage Lee's appointment to fill this vacancy.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Dwyer, III

From: [E.J. Redding](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Lee Bruner
Date: Monday, July 31, 2023 11:22:26 AM

Good morning:

I am writing on behalf of Mr. Lee Bruner.

I have known Lee professionally and personally for many years. He is a man of integrity and strong moral character. I am certain there is no better candidate to be judge in this court.

Respectfully;

E. J. Redding
406-431-0962

Sent from my iPad

From: [Timothy Harada](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Montana's Workers' Compensation Judge Selection
Date: Sunday, July 30, 2023 1:06:03 PM

Dear Governor Gianfore and Lieutenant Governor Juras:

We write in support of the application of Thomas Lee Bruner to serve as Montana's Workers' Compensation Judge.

Mr. Bruner has an extensive and diverse personal and professional background. Lee has served our state well for many years and will continue to do so in his capacity as Workers' Compensation Judge. During the time we have known Lee, he has shown himself to be extremely hardworking with impressive legal competence and analytical abilities. Those characteristics, combined with his professionalism and calm temperament, will serve him well as a judge. Most importantly, from our interactions with Lee, we believe and hope he will treat his role on the bench as a jurist who applies the law, not someone who legislates from the bench.

Lee understands the impact the Workers' Compensation laws have on workers and employers, and he has the intelligence, skill, and temperament to be a fair judge. We encourage you to appoint Lee Bruner to serve as Montana's next Workers' Compensation Judge.

Sincerely,
Tim and Ashley Harada

From: [Margaret Morgan](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommend Lee Bruner for Judge
Date: Monday, July 31, 2023 2:07:36 PM

Hannah:

I would like to recommend Lee Bruner for the Work Comp Judge position that is coming open. Lee is a man of principal and integrity and would be a perfect fit for the position. With his knowledge and experience there is no better person for this position.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Lee's appointment.

Margaret Morgan
Helena, MT

AUSTIN KNUDSEN



STATE OF MONTANA

August 1, 2023

Via Email

Hon. Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana
ATTN: Hannah Slusser
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 69620
nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Application of Thomas Lee Bruner for Workers' Compensation Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte:

It is my pleasure to support the application of Lee Bruner to fill the vacancy for the Montana Workers' Compensation judgeship. Mr. Bruner is an eminently qualified attorney with decades of experience in civil litigation. His legal acumen, temperament, and commitment to textualism would be an asset to the Workers' Compensation Court and the citizens of Montana. I strongly urge you to appoint Mr. Bruner.

Sincerely,

Christian B. Corrigan
Montana Solicitor General

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

215 North Sanders
PO Box 201401
Helena, MT 59620-1401

(406) 444-2026
Contactdoj@mt.gov
mtdoj.gov

From: [John Janik](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Thomas Lee Bruner Nomination
Date: Friday, August 4, 2023 4:33:44 PM

August 4, 2023

Dear Governor Gianforte.

My name is John Janik. I am writing you this letter of support for Thomas (Lee) Bruner as the Montana Workers Compensation Judge. I consider Lee one of my closest friends. I have known Lee for well over twenty years as a friend, neighbor and counsel for Jefferson Valley EMS and Rescue (JVEMSR). As my neighbor and friend, Lee and his family have played an instrumental role in not only my development as a productive adult, but the development of my family and our community.

Jefferson Valley EMS and Rescue is the ambulance service in Whitehall. This is the community Lee was raised in, and where he currently resides with his family. Lee was one of the founders of Partners United For Life Saving Education (PULSE) the governing body of JVEMSR. PULSE/JVEMSR, a private non-profit ambulance service is one of the most stable services in the area due in part to the most dedicated community members of which Lee is.

In reflection about who Lee is, I have to mention that he is empathetic to those in need, one example is the young man, RJ whom Lee and his family took in as a foster child to raise alongside their three boys.

Over the years I have seen Lee drop whatever he is doing to provide assistance to anyone who calls. Even when I have called in the middle of the night!

Getting to the point, I believe you and the residents of Montana would be represented well with Thomas (Lee) Bruner as the Montana Workers Compensation Judge.

Sincerely
John Janik
President Partners for Life Saving Education.
406-581-3723

August 4, 2023

Honorable Greg Gianforte and Honorable Kristen Juras
Attn: Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620



**MONTANA
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

Dear Governor Gianforte and Lt. Governor Juras,

Montana employers and employees depend on the Workers' Compensation Court to resolve their disputes fairly and efficiently. Lee Brunner's diverse professional and personal experience provide him a well-rounded perspective that will serve the people of Montana well. Moreover, Lee is a man of character and integrity that will treat all parties that come before him with respect and apply the law justly.

Montana businesses and workers would be well served and fairly treated by Mr. Brunner.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd O'Hair".

Todd O'Hair, President and CEO
Montana Chamber of Commerce

August 4, 2023

Governor Greg Gianforte
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
Via email to nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Support for Thomas Lee Bruner as Workers' Compensation Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte:

This letter is provided in support of Thomas (Lee) Bruner's application for Workers' Compensation Judge. I am an agricultural law attorney in Dillon, Montana. For the past two years, I have also been the Public Affairs Director for the Montana Wool Growers Association (MWGA). I know Lee as a sheep producer and a member of MWGA.

Throughout my time as Public Affairs Director, Lee has helped me understand the policy issues affecting the sheep industry and has worked on those issues at the state and national level. With his legal knowledge and his experience in the sheep industry, he understands agricultural policy at a level most people simply cannot. Lee's perspective is one that can only be gained through years balancing a career in law with manual labor. The perspective is rare and valuable, particularly for someone in the judiciary.

The qualities that have most stood out to me in working with Lee are his common sense, perceptiveness, and ability to keep issues in perspective. He is also adept at reducing complex ideas—legal or otherwise—to a clear and concise format that is easy for anyone to understand. These are important qualities for a judge, particularly a judge dealing with many unrepresented parties, as you see in the Workers' Compensation Court.

Finally, Lee's demeanor suits the position. Despite having vast knowledge and experience, he is one of the most understated and humble attorneys I know. He listens more than he talks, he evaluates carefully, and he is always willing to help. I believe Lee has the qualities of a great Workers' Compensation Court Judge, and I know he would serve the position well.

Sincerely,



Calli J. Michaels
Attorney



DONEY CROWLEY P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Ted J. Doney (1942-1994)
Jacqueline R. Papez
Jack G. Connors
Benjamin C. Burns
Frank C. Crowley, MS
R. Allan Payne, RGp, MS
Cynthia D. Brooks
Mark A. Thieszen

August 2, 2023

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Lee Bruner, Esq. Nominee for Workers' Compensation Court Judge

Members of the Commission

I strongly recommend Lee Bruner for the position of Judge of the Workers' Compensation Court. I have known Lee for approximately 20 years, initially when he was in private practice with the Poore Roth firm in Butte and later through his affiliation with our law firm in Helena.

I have reviewed the professional biographies of the current nominees and all of the nominees present impressive resumes. That said, the fact that Mr. Bruner has not specialized in a workers' compensation practice in no way places him at a disadvantage from the other nominees. Indeed the breadth and depth of his 30-year legal career offer advantages over the other nominees.

First, what jumps out in Mr. Bruner's resume is his 30 years of medical malpractice defense. As the Commission members will recognize, this branch of practice exposes counsel to myriad complex issues of medical conditions, injuries, and disabilities, with respect to both liability and damages. It would be difficult to estimate the huge number of medical records/reports as well as conflicting expert medical reports that Mr. Bruner has read over his 30 years of practice in this area. Moreover, actually trying many of these cases before juries requires an additional expertise in the nuances of diagnosis and treatment of medical injuries and conditions. The 30 years in developing this expertise in the interaction of legal and medical issues equips Mr. Bruner with a deeper skill set for making rulings of such issues demanded of the Workers' Compensation Judge. Relatedly, as a litigator in both medical malpractice and other civil litigation, Mr. Bruner has been steeped in court procedures, discovery and discovery disputes – another dimension of judicial responsibility where Mr. Bruner would bring great strength and experience to the Judge position.

Hannah Slusser
August 2, 2023
Page 2 of 2

Secondly, Mr. Bruner would also bring administrative experience to the position. Any agency of the State including the Workers' Compensation Court has administrative needs, such as budgeting, human resources, scheduling, performance metrics, and the like. Mr. Bruner, in his current position as Deputy Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court, has been directly involved in helping to assure the smooth functioning of the Court and would bring this expertise to the prompt, fair, and efficient administration of matters before the Workers' Compensation Court.

Third, I would refer the Commission members to the broad experience that Mr. Bruner has gained from his activities with administrative agencies. In particular his role as a member in the important Board of Environmental Review (BER) has exposed him to cases where legal and technical issues are braided together and require the members to apply regulatory standards and procedures to often complex technical issues. This would add breadth to Mr. Bruner's skills in analyzing the technical details of worker claims and the defenses to such claims. Relatedly, Mr. Bruner's many years as a part-time hands-on agricultural worker in his family's business has heightened his awareness of potential worker injury and safety issues.

Lastly, based on my personal knowledge and experience with Mr. Bruner as a lawyer and a person, I can vouch for his integrity and his unwavering commitment to justice, fair play and respect for the law. He has always been willing to work long hours if necessary, and he takes great pride in the quality of his work product. I consider Mr. Bruner to be a great credit to the legal profession. Should the Commission select Mr. Bruner as Judge, the Commission should be most confident in the prompt, fair, and efficient functioning of the Workers' Compensation Court.

Thank you for considering my comments and recommendation.

Sincerely,



Frank C. Crowley
Senior Counsel

9163.000 - PL 391571



August 4, 2023
Via Email Only

Hon. Greg Gianforte
Governor of Montana
ATTN: Hannah Slusser
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620
nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Application of Thomas Lee Bruner for Workers' Compensation Judge

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I wholeheartedly support Lee Bruner to fill the vacancy for the Montana Workers' Compensation judgeship. Lee has decades of experience handling the type of civil cases that will go before him as a judge on the Workers' Compensation Court.

I cannot praise Lee enough for how he handles his responsibilities at the Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court's Office in assisting all comers in navigating the oft-byzantine system of court rules to promote access to justice. His demeanor, professionalism, and commitment to elevating the practice of law will serve the Workers' Compensation Court and the State of Montana well.

Sincerely,

Brent Mead
Deputy Solicitor General
State of Montana

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

215 North Sanders
PO Box 201401
Helena, MT 59620-1401

(406) 444-2026
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