

September 24, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I urge you to consider Chris Abbott for a position on the First Judicial District Court.

I am a Labor Relations Specialist with the State Office of Labor Relations. Over the last several years, I have come to know Chris through his position with his union. He has attended most of the collective bargaining agreement negotiations in the last several biennia and he co-chairs the Labor-Management Committee for the public defender attorneys.

In the time I have known Chris, I have found him to be a fair person. He is always a voice of reason in our discussions. During negotiations, he always has constructive and insightful contributions to the discussion and helps bring the parties together. Although Chris is always easy to work with, he is always a strong advocate for his fellow workers.

In my work with him, Chris has shown himself to be a reasonable, fair-minded, and intelligent person. I think these are all traits I would like to see in a judge. Please consider him for the position.

Sincerely,



Greg Martin

**SANDY OITZINGER  
801 STUART STREET  
HELENA, MT 59601**

Telephone: (406) 443-0235 Fax: E-mail: orasand@mt.net

September 26, 2015

Judicial Nominating Commission Members  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of the Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

**Subject: 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court Appointment**

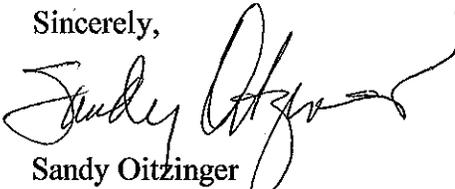
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please accept this letter as my public comment requesting that the name of Christopher Abbott, Esq. be forwarded as a recommendation from the Judicial Nominating Commission to Governor Bullock.

As you know, Mr. Abbott is distinguishing himself as a Public Defender, and for this reason I strongly recommend him for the First District seat. Experience with, and an orientation toward, access to justice will optimize and improve Montana's justice system in critically important ways. Montana advocates strive daily to bring actual criminal justice practices in line with Montana's Constitutional protections. Attorney Abbott's talents and priorities will serve Montana well in this area. His demonstrated scholarship, energy, legal publishing history, multiple clerkships and CLE presentations demonstrate what a stellar fit overall he'll be for our 1<sup>st</sup> District seat.

Thank you so much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Sandy Oitzinger

United States Court of Appeals  
Ninth Circuit



Chambers of  
**HARRY PREGERSON**  
United States Circuit Judge

21800 Oxnard Street, Suite 1140  
Woodland Hills, California 91367  
Telephone [818] 710-7791  
Facsimile [818] 710-7816

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I strongly recommend appointment of Chris Abbott to the vacant judgeship on the First Judicial District Court. He would be a great asset to the bench.

I met Chris during his clerkship with the late James R. Browning in 2006 and 2007. At the time, Judge Browning was reducing his caseload. He allowed me to borrow Chris to assist with the work in my chambers. Chris assisted my chambers in preparing for several oral argument calendars in Pasadena and Seattle. Always willing to shoulder his fair share, Chris took on a substantial portion of the bench memoranda, argument preparation, and disposition drafting associated with each calendar.

I found Chris to be hardworking, smart, and organized. He tackled issues both simple and complex with diligence and care. A rigorous and analytical thinker, Chris could sift through the arguments and counterarguments of the parties and get to the crux of the issues of each case. I found the insights and perspectives contained in his bench memoranda very helpful when it came time to decide cases during conference. When it came time to draft opinions, memorandum dispositions, concurrences, and dissents, Chris demonstrated he could be a clear and forceful writer.

Most of all, I found Chris always took seriously his obligation to treat each party to an appeal with the respect and consideration they deserved. His work for me demonstrated judgment, empathy, and thoughtfulness.

I am sure experience has only sharpened the talents and compassion Chris showed just one year out of law school. His choice to forego other, more profitable job opportunities that his academic record might otherwise warrant to work as a public defender speaks to his character. I note with admiration his choice to continue in that important and difficult role for the past eight years.

During his time working with my chambers, Chris showed he was already developing the traits crucial to being a fair and compassionate jurist. His record since confirms that assessment was not wrong. I therefore strongly encourage this Commission to consider him for appointment to the position of district court judge.

Sincerely,

*Harry Pregerson*

United States Circuit Judge  
Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 1, 2015 5:30 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Keegan Flaherty [<mailto:keegan.flaherty@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 29, 2015 10:34 AM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Christopher Abott Nomination

Judicial Nomination Commission,

I am writing to provide a letter of recommendation for Christopher Abbott as he seeks to fill Judge Sherlock's open seat upon retirement.

From August 2013 to August 2015 I worked as the Executive Director at the Montana Innocence Project. During my time there, I had the privilege of working with Christopher on a *pro bono* basis, as well as witnessing the important work he was doing for the Public Defender Office.

Christopher has a lot to offer the Helena community, as well as the Judicial District 1:

First, he is extremely dedicated to public service. This is demonstrated by his investment in equal access to justice through his service of a public defender for 8 years.

Second, Christopher has an excellent reputation among criminal defense lawyers, judges, and prosecutors. At the Montana Innocence Project, we often called on Christopher to provide his insight on prospective cases and cases in litigation, as we highly respected his knowledge of the law.

Third, he is one of the smartest attorneys I have ever met. This is proven by his writing skills, graduating with high honors from UW, and clerking for the Ninth Circuit.

Fourth, he has extensive courtroom experience and has tried some of the most complex and serious criminal cases. He has argued in front of 23 jury trials and has appeared before judges in 13 of the 22 judicial districts in the state.

Finally, Christopher is compassionate. He not only believes everyone deserves access to justice, but he also understands the dignity of all people. He is also willing to listen to all parties from all walks of life, take seriously how court decisions impact people, businesses, organizations, and agencies; and as a result, will be mindful of avoiding bias and prejudice in decisions.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter of reference for Christopher Abott.

Keegan Flaherty, MSW  
406-544-4538

September 23, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: Public Comment on 1st Judicial District Nomination of Christopher David Abbott

Ms. Menzies and members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

In my brief time as a young professional in Lewis and Clark County, I have had the pleasure of interacting with the 1st Judicial District from within the County Attorney's Office, the Office of the Governor, as a state employee, and as a private citizen. A competitive field, the legal community in Lewis and Clark County has a number of highly-qualified, barred members, but none, in my estimation, spoken about as highly as Mr. Christopher Abbott.

A dedicated public defender from our first interactions when I was an intern at the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office to our continued encounters during engagement in civic and non-profit organizations, Mr. Abbott has displayed a compassion and dedication to his work and peers that is truly admirable. With many friends and colleagues working in and with the Lewis and Clark court system, I am accustomed to hearing positive reactions to the mention of Mr. Abbott's name routinely followed by a story of his selflessness and professionalism. He continued mentorship and willingness to assist his fellow attorneys is highly indicative of the respect he has for the legal community and their reciprocal respect of his knowledge and person.

The Offices of the Public Defender of the State of Montana are overworked, overburdened, and incredibly important; Mr. Abbott's commitment to providing quality representation to his clients shows an awareness, a dedication, and a keen interest in engaging with and fairly applying the high standards expected of magistrates in Montana.

While his qualifications speak for themselves through his application and writing sample, Mr. Abbott's community involvement and high quality of character show a nominee whom exceeds the standards set and would continue to do so for our communities, our county, and our courts.

I strongly encourage the commission to forward his application to Governor Bullock and for Governor Bullock to consider appointing Mr. Abbott to the bench.

Respectfully,



Nikolas Griffith



*The Big Sky Country*

## MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**REPRESENTATIVE MARY ANN DUNWELL**  
HOUSE DISTRICT 84

HELENA ADDRESS:  
CAPITOL BUILDING  
PO BOX 200400  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400  
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

COMMITTEES:  
TAXATION  
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LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATION

HOME ADDRESS:  
2520 LOOKOUT CIRCLE  
HELENA, MT 59601  
PHONE: (406) 461-5358  
EMAIL: REP.MARYANN.DUNWELL@MT.GOV

September 26, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
C/o Lois Menzies, Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission members,

I am a state legislator representing House District 84 Helena/East Helena and am writing in strong support of Christopher David Abbott to fill the vacancy position of district court judge for the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District, Lewis & Clark and Broadwater Counties. District Court Judge Jeffrey Sherlock leaves big shoes to fill and I believe Chris will fill them and may even wear out the shoe leather in his pursuit of justice for all.

In the several years that I have known Chris, I have been extremely impressed with his dogged determination to assure the fairness and integrity of our system of equal and fair justice. Chris walks the talk and demonstrates his strong belief in equal representation and opportunity for all Montanans, regardless of socioeconomic status or ability to pay. He exemplifies repeatedly through his good work as a dedicated, hard-working public defender that justice does not only go to the highest bidder of the privileged, but to the indigent, voiceless and ordinary citizens as well.

I firmly believe that Chris would be fair, honest and unbiased towards witnesses and litigants with malice towards none in respect to politics, race, creed, sexual orientation, gender, age, appearance or socioeconomic lot in life. As district court judge, Chris would run his court room with an air of sincere servant leadership and in a highly efficient, effective, judicious, careful, thoughtful and just manner. I wholeheartedly encourage your recommendation of Christopher David Abbott to fill the vacancy seat in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District. Thank you for your consideration of my public comment.

Sincerely,

Representative Mary Ann Dunwell  
Montana House District 84 Helena/East Helena

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Friday, October 2, 2015 5:26 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Jessica Wilkerson [<mailto:jessica.wilkerson@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2015 5:08 PM  
**To:** [Lsd22@yahoo.com](mailto:Lsd22@yahoo.com); Liz Halverson; [rusche.ryan@gmail.com](mailto:rusche.ryan@gmail.com); [nancyzadick@gmail.com](mailto:nancyzadick@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Comment for Christopher Abbot

Good evening,

I write to submit a comment in support of Christopher Abbot for First Judicial District Judge. Christopher is a thoughtful, intelligent, and hard-working lawyer. He is honestly, the smartest lawyer I know. Despite having a very tough job, working on behalf of some very unsympathetic, clients he has maintained a stellar reputation within the community of Helena and Montana at large as a fair, thorough, and zealous advocate. I am regularly impressed with his analytic abilities and his moral compass. The 1st Judicial District and all of Montana would be lucky to have Mr. Abbot serving on the Bench.

Best regards,

Jessica L. Wilkerson, Esquire.

LAW OFFICES

Keller, Reynolds, Drake,  
Johnson and Gillespie, P.C.

THOMAS Q. JOHNSON  
RICHARD E. GILLESPIE  
JACQUELINE T. LENMARK  
JOE SEIFERT  
GREGORY A. VAN HORSSSEN  
CHARLES G. ADAMS  
SARAH P. LARUE  
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OF COUNSEL  
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PAUL T. KELLER (1907-2003)  
GLEN L. DRAKE (1927-2001)

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E-MAIL: firm@kellerlawmt.com

October 7, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

*Re: First Judicial District Court Judge Position*

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

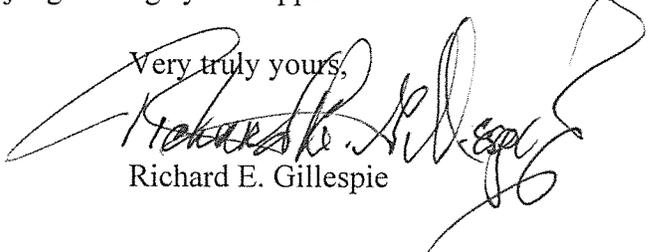
I urge you to consider Chris Abbott as a nominee for appointment as a Judge on the First Judicial District Court Bench.

I have known and observed Chris from my position on the Public Defender Commission and in court. Chris has repeatedly demonstrated his exceptional talent and skill as a public defender trial lawyer not only because of his "wins" but also with his ability to gain the confidence of his clients and to control those sometimes difficult clients, his objective and reasonable arguments on their behalf, and his ability to get along and work with the judges and opposing counsel.

His ability to listen and his even temperament are qualities every judge should possess. Chris has appeared before the Public Defender Commission on several occasions to bring subjects to our attention or explain situations. Chris is a problem solver. His intent is always informational and calmly looking for or proposing solutions for the betterment of the Office of the Public Defender and, in turn, the agency's clients. I have observed Chris testifying before the Legislature. I sat with him on a panel before the Trustees of the State Bar Association. Always the same levelheadedness and reasoned approach.

Chris's resume and, notably, his clerkship with Justice Browning are tributes to his intellect. His clerkship gave him insight into the role of a judge that few other attorneys get. Chris has all of the qualities needed to be the new judge. I urge your support.

Very truly yours,

  
Richard E. Gillespie

October 1, 2015

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

I submit this letter in support of appointing Christopher David Abbott to the position of district court judge for the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District. I am familiar with Mr. Abbott as I worked with him at the Office of the State Public Defender for almost two and a half years. Mr. Abbott was both my coworker and my mentor, so I know him very well. I do not recommend him lightly, nor do I recommend him based solely on friendship. I recommend him because I know beyond any doubt that he is the best person for this job.

First of all, Mr. Abbott is very qualified for the job. He has a level of intelligence and knowledge of Montana law rivaled by few. He has an uncanny ability to cite case law and statute from memory. He has extensive experience and practice working in criminal defense. He has worked not only on countless criminal defense cases, but juvenile cases, civil commitments, and dependent neglect cases. In any area that he does not have experience, he would no doubt be a quick study. I won't cite his entire resume; suffice to say he has the experience necessary for the job.

Second of all, he will be fair and impartial. In appointing judges, it is important to select a candidate who will serve the bench and adhere to the law. Unfortunately, I think too often qualified individuals are not considered because they have served as public defenders. I think this stems both from the stigma of a lack of popularity with the represented population, and some unfounded worry that someone who has worked as a public defender will be too lax with defendants. I can assure you that the latter will not be the case with Mr. Abbott. He has an ability to play the devil's advocate in any argument and weigh both sides of the issue. Although he has

worked extensively as a public defender, his prior work should not exclude him as it does not seem to do so with the many prosecutors appointed to the bench. I think defense attorneys and prosecutors alike would need to be on their toes in front of Mr. Abbott.

As far as the popularity of his chosen profession, an individual who chooses to uphold the constitution even when it is unpopular and difficult seems to be just the type of individual who would be well suited to serve as a judge. Mr. Abbott would adhere to the law without any concern over the popularity of his decisions, and that is as close to fair and impartial as anyone can get.

One of my favorite voir dire questions I use in jury trials is to ask the jurors to put themselves in my client's shoes. I ask them if they were the defendant, would they want a juror like them? I pose this same question here. If I were a defendant, would I want Mr. Abbott as my judge? The answer is I would. This is not because I would expect leniency or that he would favor the defense. I would want him as my judge because I could expect him to listen to all arguments made and apply the law as it stands. That is the most anyone can hope for in a judge and that is exactly what you will get if you appoint Mr. Abbott to the bench.

I urge you to appoint Christopher Abbott as district court judge for the First Judicial District.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brady Minow Smith  
Trial Attorney  
Salt Lake Legal Defender Association  
424 East 500 South, Suite 300  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

**TEAL MITTELSTADT**  

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**ATTORNEY AT LAW**

September 16, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of the Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

re: Christopher David Abbott

Dear Members of the Commission,

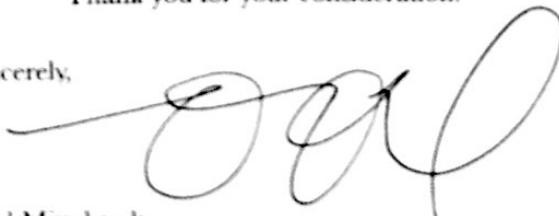
I am writing in support of Christopher Abbott for the position of First Judicial District Court Judge. I have known and worked along side Chris professionally for a number of years. I have the utmost respect for him as an attorney, and as a human being. He was a mentor for me while I worked at the Public Defenders Office, and though I am now a contract attorney for the Public Defenders Office, I still consider him a mentor, because he is a true encyclopedia of legal knowledge and has handled the gamut issues. He is a fine and detail oriented practitioner, quick to learn and retain any knowledge available. He is thorough, diligent and fair in his practice, and I have no doubt that he would manifest those same traits and more as a district court judge. He is a true public servant, committed to ethical standards as well as an educated and dignified practice of the law.

I believe it is necessary to consider how much time a district court judge deals with matters related to criminal law and procedure. It is of great importance for someone to have experience in the practice of criminal law, because the judge is a key and heavily relied upon part in any case. They need to be well versed and understand law and procedure, they need to be fair, they need to have an even keel and they need to give everyone an opportunity to be heard. I urge you to take into consideration Chris's experience, which he would bring to the position of a district court judge. The public feels the most confidence in the judges who operate with fairness and courtesy, giving an opportunity to be heard and explaining matters in a clear, unbiased and concise fashion. I have no doubt Chris would operate in a fair, impartial and courteous manner, just as he does now.

Though we as his colleagues would be mourn the loss of such an amazing attorney, we would rest assured to know that we would have an intelligent, knowledgeable, patient, unbiased and fair district court judge.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Teal Mittelstadt

Candida Quinn  
428 N. Benton Ave.  
Helena, Montana 59601  
[ckcquinn@msn.com](mailto:ckcquinn@msn.com)  
(406) 495-0374

October 3, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, Montana 59620-3005

RE: Chris Abbott – Application for First Judicial District Court Judgeship Appointment

Dear Members of the Commission:

I write in support of the application of Chris Abbott for the pending judicial vacancy in the First Judicial District. I believe that Chris would make a strong district court judge, and I appreciate the opportunity to provide my perspective.

By way of background, I worked with Chris in Helena as an assistant public defender for about three years, from 2009 to 2012. Part of that time we worked together in Region 4 of the Office of the State Public Defender (OPD), and we continued to work in the same building while he was on staff in the OPD's Major Crimes Unit. Although I have since returned to a federal practice, my years at the OPD gave me regular exposure to Montana's First Judicial District Court and ample opportunity to observe Chris in action.

I believe Chris would make a diligent, impartial, and competent judge, and I can offer a sense of the basis for my confidence in him. Chris handled many criminal and civil cases during my OPD tenure, both in the First Judicial District and elsewhere around the state. The bulk of these cases involved defendants and respondents in serious trouble. Chris worked steadily, hard, and creatively on their behalf. For example, I know that he was diligent in making sure that the strategies that he and his clients developed dovetailed well with matters pending for the client in other courts. He seemed to communicate well with clients and took their priorities seriously.

Chris is an extraordinarily competent legal analyst. Because I had a background in immigration law, my OPD colleagues would often consult me when defending immigrants against criminal charges. U.S. immigration law changes rapidly, the interplay with state criminal law can be counterintuitive to the criminal defense attorney, and the consequences to the client can be significant. Chris grasped these issues well. He researched and thought through them carefully and seemed to have an unusually clear picture of the immigration legal scheme. I cannot recall disagreeing with any of his

Judicial Nomination Commission  
October 3, 2015  
Page 2

preliminary immigration-related conclusions, and he quite capably helped these clients to navigate our legal system. I would expect that someone who so clearly understands and executes so well his role as an advocate would have a leg up in transitioning to the role of impartial judge.

Finally, Chris is unfailingly considerate and generous to his OPD colleagues with his time and expertise, thereby promoting high quality legal advocacy by the agency as a whole. He is skillful at distilling key issues, and I often found his suggestions helpful to generating a fresh approach to a difficult case of my own.

I hope these comments will assist the Commission in deciding to recommend Chris for appointment. Thank you again for the opportunity to shed additional light on his qualifications.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Quinn', written in a cursive style.

Candida Quinn

**Jackson Law Firm, P.C.**  
**Counselors at Law**

Gregory A. Jackson

jacksonlawfirm@qwest.net

320 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 443-2140  
Fax (406) 443-3727

October 5, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: Christopher Abbott

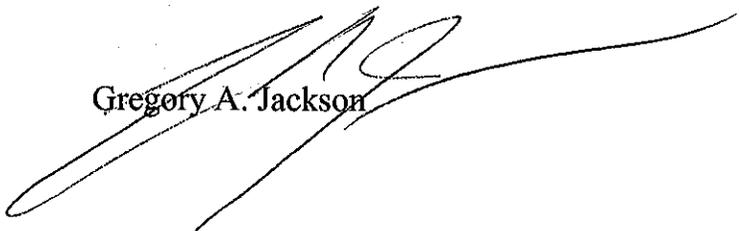
To the Honorable Judicial Nomination Commission:

This letter is to support and recommend Christopher Abbott for the position of District Judge for the First Judicial District Court.

I have been practicing law since my admission to the bar in 1973. For many years my practice was a general practice, handling virtually every type of civil litigation. The past 20 years or so my practice has been primarily criminal litigation, handling criminal matters from misdemeanors to death penalty defense. During my 42 plus years of practice, I have practiced in the majority of the Districts of the State, Federal District Courts and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. As a consequence, I have come to recognize what is required to be an effective judge, who is respected by both for the members of the bar, as well litigants/defendants seeking justice.

I have known Chris Abbott since 2007, when he first came to Helena as a Public Defender. Since that time I have observed his practice and skills, both legal and interpersonal. I am also familiar with his educational and legal background. Christopher Abbott definitely possesses the requisite character, intellect, temperament, knowledge and experience to be an excellent District Judge. I highly recommend him for the position of District Judge.

Sincerely,

  
Gregory A. Jackson

# Jefferson County Attorney's Office

Matt Johnson, County Attorney  
*mjohnson@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov*

Steven C. Haddon, Chief Deputy  
*shaddon@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov*



Kellie J. Doherty, Paralegal-Investigator  
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Heather Rykal, Legal Secretary  
*hrykal@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov*

PO Box H, Boulder, MT 59632

Phone: (406) 225-4010

Fax: (406) 225-4049

October 2, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court Appointment

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Chris Abbott with my strong recommendation that he be selected to fill the vacant judgeship for the First Judicial District Court. I am confident that he would be a great asset to the bench.

I have come to know Chris as he has appeared here in Jefferson County to represent defendants on various cases as a public defender. As an attorney, Chris is well known for his hard work ethic, diligence, and his intellect. Chris too is known for his strong advocacy for his clients, but likewise he is complimented by the traits of being well mannered and reasonable. Professionally, he has all of the necessary qualities to be a beneficial attribute to the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District as the next appointed judge.

I am very supportive of Chris Abbott's nomination. I know he is more than capable of being an excellent judge as he has over the years demonstrated the skills, abilities, and qualities that I feel are important traits in a judge.

Sincerely,

Matt Johnson  
Jefferson County Attorney

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2015 4:08 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Carrie Severson [<mailto:carrie.severson@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 07, 2015 9:19 AM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Public Comment:First Judicial District Court

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of my personal acquaintance, Christopher Abbott. We met through extracurricular activities during grade school. As a young man, he was kind, balanced, and focused; as he grew, nothing changed. Our views may not always coincide, but I have only ever experienced objective, thoughtful approaches to issues that arise.

He has the capacity for open-mindedness and the ability to fully listen to everyone who comes before him. I believe that these abilities will provide perspective to any preconceived notions he may have on any given topic. Everyone has preconceived notions, not everyone has the ability to reflect upon those in order to move forward in a productive, positive manner.

Please provide thorough consideration to Christopher in your selection of the First Judicial District Court Judge.

Sincerely,  
Carrie Severson

## Cook, Kevin

---

**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2015 4:07 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Steve Andersen [<mailto:mtcity@andersenlawoffice.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 06, 2015 12:32 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Cc:** 'Christopher Abbott'  
**Subject:** Re: Abbot application for DCT Judge in First Judicial District

Judicial Nomination Commission

c/o Lois Menzies

Office of Court Administrator

PO Box 203005

Helena, MT 59620-3005

October 7<sup>th</sup> 2015

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission,

Please accept this public comment on behalf of Mr. Christopher Abbot who is applying to fill the vacancy left by J. Sherlock's retirement in the First Judicial District Court in Lewis and Clark County. Mr. Abbot is a veteran public defender who has managed to excel in a highly pressurized system that demands he juggle dozens of felonies at once. Not only does he manage to succeed year after year under highly stressful circumstances, but he manages to represent his myriad clients effectively and diligently.

As a member of the Major Crimes Unit in the Office of Public Defender, Mr. Abbot continues to fight for his clients who have often committed heinous crimes that leave little room for public empathy. When a fair and just plea agreement is out of reach, Mr. Abbott will take complicated cases to trial—at times securing acquittals against heavy odds. Yet when a just plea agreement is in the best interest of his client, he applies a reasoned approach and explains why the evidence dictates a relative admission of guilt. Mr. Abbot applies an open minded approach to the law that allows him to see both sides of an argument and decide which is the best course of action for his client.

I have had the pleasure of observing Mr. Abbot in court many times. His measured demeanor eschews courtroom histrionics and favors a reasoned argument delivered with grace and compassion. The district court judges in the First District clearly respect the effort he puts forth and the manner in which he plies his craft. Mr. Abbot's vast experience, even personality, studied diligence, legal acumen, intellectual capacity, and commitment to justice for all make him an ideal candidate for district court judge.

Please give serious consideration to Mr. Abbot's application and allow Governor Bullock the opportunity to appoint such a well-qualified colleague to the bench who will serve the First Judicial District honorably for many years to come.

Respectfully yours,

*Steve Andersen*

**Andersen Law Office**

Stephen M. Andersen

Attorney at Law

11 Friendship Lane

Montana City, MT 59634

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## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2015 4:07 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Terry Minow [<mailto:terry.lynn.minow@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 05, 2015 4:44 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:**

October 5, 2015

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

It is my honor to recommend Chris Abbott be appointed district court judge for the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District.

Mr. Abbott and my daughter, Brady Minow Smith, until recently worked together at the Helena Public Defender's Office. Brady was fortunate to have Chris as her mentor. I heard about his work ethic, which is outstanding. He was tough and fair in expecting her & other colleagues to work to their fullest capacity to defend the rights of their clients. Brady told me about his brilliant knowledge of the law and outstanding skills as a trial attorney and public defender. She told me that he was a great teacher, helping her to develop her own skills while guiding that development.

Those assets, combined with a calm temperament and a deep respect for the law, combine to make Chris Abbott an outstanding candidate for district judge. Chris is also compassionate, fair-minded and a good listener, other important characteristics that make him well-suited to the role of judge.

Others have recognized his talent and skills. Graduating with high honors from University of Washington Law School, clerking for Judge James Browning in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, Public Defender of the Year in 2009, Peer Recognition Award in 2012, and Outstanding Criminal Advocate in 2013 are examples.

Despite these awards and recognitions, Chris is a humble and modest person. He is apparently not motivated by public accolades and isn't quick to trumpet his own accomplishments. While this is a fine and appropriate temperament for a judge, sometimes people like Chris are overlooked due to their own modesty. I hope that won't happen in this process.

Thank you for considering Chris Abbott to be appointed to be district court judge.

Sincerely,

Terry Minow

502 Lower Valley Road

Boulder, MT 59632

## Cook, Kevin

---

**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2015 4:05 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Jonathan Morgan [<mailto:jmorgan75@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, October 04, 2015 9:33 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Christoper Abbott, Letter in Support of Appointment to 1st Judicial District Court

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission,

I am writing you in support of Christopher Abbott, and encourage the Judicial Nomination Commission to forward his name to Governor Bullock for appointment to the First Judicial District Court.

I have had the opportunity and good fortune to work with Chris at the public defender office in Helena, Montana. During my time at the Office of the Public Defender I often turned to Chris as a mentor. Chris's advocacy skills and judgment were second to none. Chris's ability and willingness shoulder such a heavy case load and eagerly assist others within the office speaks well of his skills as an attorney, his commitment to justice, and the value he places on diligent, thoughtful consideration of the factual and legal considerations within each case.

Chris has chosen a life of public service, and that, in my opinion, represents the highest purpose that our profession can strive for. His work ethic, experience, and commitment to justice will be an asset to the bench. More importantly, those same virtues will serve the public--those that look to the court for justice--well. It is my sincere hope that the Commission forward Mr. Abbott's name to Governor Bullock for consideration as district court judge.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Morgan

October 11, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: Christopher D. Abbott – Public Comment, First Judicial District Judgeship Vacancy

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I support the nomination and appointment of Christopher Abbot to fill the First Judicial District Judgeship Vacancy. I have been actively engage in civil and criminal trial practice in the state and federal courts of New Jersey and Montana for more than thirty years. I was involved in the creation of the Gallatin County and statewide public defender systems and have served as a member of the Montana Public Defender Commission. Through my experience, I have come to know Chris Abbott and that he possesses the intelligence, courtroom skills, and other qualities required to be an outstanding district judge.

Chris's application reflects the thoughtfulness and thoroughness he brings to the practice of law. He is truly dedicated to ensuring that all litigants receive the fundamental fairness that is the cornerstone to due process in the resolution of their cases. I'm confident that Chris will be an excellent district judge and an asset to the Montana judiciary.

Very truly yours,

AVIGNONE, BANICK & WILLIAMS, PLLC

By:   
Al Avignone



RICHARD T. WOOD  
INVESTIGATIONS

P.O. Box 8831  
Tucson, AZ 85738  
(916) 730-6550

rtwood@sentencingexperts.com

AZ PI 1607879 | CA PI 11568

October 10, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
C/O Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

RE: Chris Abbott

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Committee

I work as a mitigation investigator on capital crimes. During the four last years I have worked on two capital cases with Chris. I have also had contact with him at training sessions I have conducted in Montana. I found him to be bright, able and an extremely assertive advocate for his clients.

For 15 years I worked as Probation Officer in Oregon and California. For 10 of those years I worked for the US District Court for the Northern District of California. During those years I had daily contact with judges regarding sentencing, probation revocations and other issues. I had a close view of many judges and learned what makes a good one. A judge needs thoughtful judgment and a very calm temperament. From my day-to-day dealing with Chris he has shown both.

I would urge you to appoint Chris to the judgeship that he seeks. He is not only a sound lawyer but perhaps an even better man. He is the kind of man who can sit in judgment of others with a clear non-prejudiced mind who will listen to the facts and decide what is best. You cannot do better than that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RTW' or similar initials.

Richard T. Wood

6 October 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission

It is an honor to write in support of Christopher Abbott's appointment to the First Judicial District judgeship vacancy.

Chris is most notably an incredibly dedicated public servant. The strength of his character has served him well throughout his career as a public defender as he demonstrates the compassion, not just the talent, to protect the constitutional rights of people from all walks of life. His reputation as a caring and considerate man is well known in professional circles as he consistently works to uphold the dignity of all with whom he works.

In addition, Chris has the long-term experience that will enable him to preside over a courtroom. He has had more than 20 jury trials and appeared before 13 of the 22 judicial districts in the state. His professionalism and first-hand knowledge from years of on-the-ground practice will give him the necessary perspective to serve the public well.

Finally, but not incidentally, Chris is exceptionally intelligent. Academically, he graduated *magna cum laude* from university and with highest honors from law school and went on to clerk in the Ninth Circuit. Even more, he possesses the intuitive intelligence essential to the duties of a judgeship. Chris will always balance the many facets of a case and the diverse interests of the various parties involved so that his decisions are seen by all to be without bias or prejudice.

It is without hesitation that I urge you to recommend Christopher Abbott to the First Judicial District judgeship vacancy.

Sincerely,

Moffie Funk  
406-461-6785  
825 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601

Amanda Curtis  
1117 North Emmett Avenue  
Butte, Montana 59701  
406.533.9300  
curtis.butte@gmail.com

October 7, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Commission Members,

I am writing to recommend Christopher Abbott for the First Judicial District Judgeship vacancy. Chris is a fierce advocate for justice and has extensive legal experience—he is perfect for the position. I met Chris during the 2013 Legislative Session, where he offered insight and expertise on several difficult bills. I have since come to count him as a friend.

I know from personal experience that one of the most critical characteristics of a judge is their capacity for compassion. Chris understands the dignity of all people and is willing to listen to all parties from all walks of life. In addition, Chris takes seriously how court decisions impact people, businesses, organizations, and agencies, and will always be mindful of avoiding bias and prejudice in decisions.

Montana's judicial system is filled with hard-working, compassionate professionals, and Chris will make a stunning addition to the team. In Chris Abbott, the First District has an opportunity to seat an experienced workhorse who is steadfastly dedicated to his community. For the reasons listed here, I urge you to appoint Christopher Abbott.

Thank you for your time in making this important decision. If I can answer any questions, please contact me using the information listed above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Curtis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amanda Curtis



Steven T. Williams  
williamss@hallevans.com  
(406) 628-3324

October 12, 2015

Judicial Nomination Committee  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

This letter is to support and recommend Christopher Abbott for the district court judge vacancy in the First Judicial District. I worked with Mr. Abbott for 4 years at the Office of the Public Defender in Helena, MT. During this time, I was able to get to know Mr. Abbott well, and gain an appreciation for his overarching legal knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Abbott holds himself to an incredibly high standard, and when he appears in court, he is the most knowledgeable person in the room on any aspect of the law that may come up. Mr. Abbott is not swayed by emotion, instead he is very analytical with an even-keeled temperament. I have no doubt that, as a judge, Mr. Abbott would be wholly impartial and hold all parties that appeared in front of him to the same high standards he holds himself to.

Mr. Abbott is an incredibly hardworking and thorough attorney. He has a vast amount of experience both litigating complex cases and conducting extensive motions practice. As a result of his knowledge, intellect, and character, Mr. Abbott has gained universal respect from judges, prosecutors and defense counsel in the First Judicial District.

I too have the utmost respect for Mr. Abbott, and cannot recommend him highly enough for the vacant judgeship. I know that he would be a great fit for the position and ask that you strongly consider forwarding his application to Governor Bullock.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Williams  
Hall & Evans, LLC

October 9, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
Office of Court Administrator  
Attn: Lois Menzies  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: First Judicial District Judge Vacancy

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission Members,

I write in support of Christopher Abbott's application for appointment to Montana's First Judicial District Court. Chris possesses a combination of intellect, energy, and compassion that would make him an excellent and complimentary addition to the First Judicial District. I worked with Chris for several years as an attorney in the Region Four Public Defenders Office. During that time I watched him handle hundreds of cases ranging from civil dependent neglect matters to capital homicide cases. I no longer work as a public defender, but I still often call on Chris when I need advice.

I consider Chris to be one of my primary mentors as a developing attorney. He has a near encyclopedic knowledge of case law, and his office door was always open to those seeking counsel. Even while working under a crushing caseload, he makes time to help others research, prepare arguments, and write briefs. When the office is understaffed or people are unexpectedly absent Chris is the first to step up and offer his assistance. The judicial system is a team of judges, attorneys, staff, and parties and Chris would be an excellent addition.

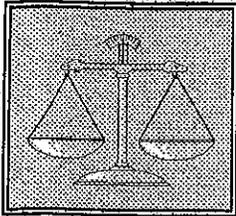
I worked with Chris as co-counsel on several serious felony criminal cases and witnessed the dedication, creativity, and attention to detail that have made him well-known and respected in the criminal defense bar throughout Montana. He considers all sides of an argument and has a true talent for translating complex legal issues so that non-attorney parties are able to understand what is happening and make informed decisions. This quality would be very beneficial on the bench.

Chris may seem like an unlikely choice for judicial office because he has dedicated so much of his career to criminal defense, but passing him by for this reason would be a mistake. He brings knowledge and a background to the court that is different, while possessing all the character traits that would make a great judge.

Sincerely,



JENNIFER L. HUDSON



# HELENA AVENUE LAW OFFICES

**C**harles E. Petaja  
**Attorney and Counselor at Law**  
1085 Helena Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 442-3625  
(406) 449-6038- Fax

October 9, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P. O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

RE: Christopher D. Abbott  
Applicant for District Court Judge - First Judicial District

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to comment about Christopher D. Abbott, who has applied for appointment to the First Judicial District Court Judgeship, which will be open shortly upon Judge Sherlock's retirement.

I have known Christopher Abbott for the past six (6) years, during my tenure as a member of the Montana Public Defender Commission. During the time period that I was a Commissioner, I had the opportunity to work with Christopher Abbott on several important committees formed for the operation and management of our state-wide public defender system. Those committees included labor management, personnel, strategic planning, collective bargaining and rules committee. I have also observed Christopher Abbott perform in jury trial proceedings and on other criminal cases. I can assure the Commission that Christopher Abbott is an excellent attorney, who has risen through the attorney ranks of the public defender system to a position of leadership. Christopher is well respected by all of his peers, including myself.

I also believe Christopher brings substantial administrative experience that is important to the operation of the District Courts. I believe that experience would be beneficial for Christopher's management of heavy case load burdens that all of our District Court Judges experience. I believe Christopher would be an excellent candidate for the District Court Judgeship. I know that he will be open minded, hard working and impartial if he is appointed as our District Judge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Charles E. Petaja". The signature is fluid and cursive.  
Charles E. Petaja

CEP/mjg

**Sue Bartlett & Eugene Fenderson**  
**516 South California Street**  
**Helena, Montana 59601-4978**  
**(406) 431-6251**  
**jsuebartlett@msn.com**

October 10, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of the Court Administrator  
P O Box 203005  
Helena MT 59620-3005

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

We write in support of Chris Abbott's application for the judgeship in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District. We support Chris for three reasons: his intelligence, knowledge, and experience.

Chris's scholastic accomplishments in high school, college, and law school eloquently attest to his intelligence. In addition, he was selected as a law clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. That position demonstrated his ability to learn quickly and produce reasoned arguments on a wide array of legal topics.

In his work as a public defender, Chris has appeared before judges in more than half of Montana's judicial districts. His exposure to this many different judges has given him an unusual knowledge of different judicial styles and approaches. He has learned first-hand how a judge can facilitate or impede the judicial process. He knows what can frustrate and what can smooth the course of a complex case in court. We think the depth of his knowledge in this area is unusual and beneficial to helping him rapidly function well as a judge.

Finally, we appreciate Chris's experience as a public defender. We know the State will always have representation – in any form of government. In our form of government, however, it is the commitment to providing representation for the indigent that is a hallmark of democracy. When done right, representing the indigent is what can keep the justice system just. Chris has done that well and knows, bone-deep, how vital that role is.

We live in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District. Through the years, we have had excellent jurists in this District. We believe Chris will fit well into that tradition. In addition, he will add a perspective from the defense bar to the backgrounds of the other judges in this District who have been prosecutors or practiced general law. We think that balance is needed.

It is our honor to recommend to you the nomination of Chris Abbott for a judgeship in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District.

Sincerely yours,



Sue Bartlett



Eugene Fenderson



# Lewis & Clark C O U N T Y



## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Andy Hunthausen

Michael A. Murray

Susan Good Geise

City County Building 316 North Park Helena, Montana 59623 406.447.8304 Fax: 406.447.8370

Judicial Nomination Commission

C/O Lois Menzies

PO Box 203005

Helena, MT 59620

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I write to you today in support of Chris Abbott and his application for nomination as a District Court Judge. I have no doubt that Chris would be a great asset to our community if appointed to the court.

Chris has proven to be a levelheaded person with all of the skills and tools necessary to be an outstanding judge. With an excellent academic background and significant relevant experience, Chris has shown that he will work hard and perform at the highest level. In addition, knows the law and has been a tireless advocate for his clients. His professionalism, sense of fairness and temperament make Chris ideal for the bench.

Montana needs judges that are of strong character and integrity. They must have passion for the law and a willingness to work hard for the people of this state. Chris Abbott fits that bill and thus I am happy to support his nomination.

Sincerely,

Andy Hunthausen

Chair - Lewis and Clark County Commission

**WENDY HOLTON**  
**Attorney at Law**  
**7 West Sixth Avenue, Suite 4-N**  
**Helena, MT 59601**

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**Telephone: (406) 442-9349**  
**Facsimile: (406) 443-4829 (call first)**

**Direct line (406) 443-4829**  
**E-mail: wholton@mt.net**

October 13, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I recommend Chris Abbott for a District Court judgeship.

I am familiar with Chris's work as a public defender here in Lewis and Clark County. I have seen the work he has done for his clients. Chris cares about his clients. Even though he is juggling many different cases, his courtroom work shows that he takes the time to learn about each one and push hard for the best result possible. He works hard on each case, researches the issues, and can formulate creative strategies for even the toughest cases.

In court, I have always known him to be prepared, articulate, and forceful in his representation of clients. He has demonstrated a vast knowledge of criminal law and has shown himself able to adapt and think quickly on his feet. Chris also maintains a professional and measured demeanor before judges, even when cases are not going his way. I have always known him to treat witnesses and opposing counsel with respect without sacrificing his willingness to stand up for his client's position at all times.

In sum, Chris has demonstrated the temperament, intelligence, and work ethic needed in a district court judge. Therefore, I strongly recommend him for the position.

Sincerely,

  
/s/ Wendy Holton

Brett P. Clark  
511 Leslie Ave.  
Helena, MT 59601  
(612) 203-0970

October 14, 2015

*Via e-mail (mtsupremecourt@mt.gov)*

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: First Judicial District Court Vacancy

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Brett Clark and I am an attorney practicing in Helena at Crowley Fleck PLLP. I submit this comment on behalf of myself personally and not on behalf of my firm.

I understand that Christopher Abbott has submitted his name for consideration for Judge Sherlock's vacancy here in Lewis and Clark County. I have known Chris for nearly twenty years, dating back to high school debate competitions here in Montana and later around the Northwest in college debate. Although I have not worked with or opposed him as an attorney due to our differing practice areas, I have always known Chris to be intelligent, thoughtful and considerate. Since our college days, he has succeeded both in law school, graduating in the top five percent of his class, and as a public defender here in Helena. Chris has built himself a strong reputation among the local bar and would be an understanding, hard-working and fair-minded judge.

I hope you will strongly consider Chris and his credentials in recommending a replacement for Judge Sherlock.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett Clark", written in a cursive style.

Brett P. Clark

# From the Desk of Tyler R. Gernant

P.O. Box 8307  
Missoula, MT 59807

October 14, 2015

*Via Email Transmission Only*

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies, Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005  
Email: [mtsupremecourt@mt.gov](mailto:mtsupremecourt@mt.gov)

## **Re: Recommendation of Christopher Abbott**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

With great pleasure, I write to you in support of Chris Abbott's application for nomination and appointment to the Montana First Judicial District Court. I first met Chris when he began dating a friend, which already demonstrated good judgment. Chris's enthusiasm and intelligence was immediately apparent. Since that time, I have come to know Chris well and my respect for him has only grown with time.

Chris's passion for the law shines through in every facet of his life. Despite being primarily focused on criminal law, he displays a tremendous interest and aptitude in a wide range of civil issues. While I was still practicing law, I found Chris to be an invaluable resource for bouncing ideas around. His logical, fair and well-reasoned advice was almost always useful in resolving tricky and contentious issues with which I had become too close. This is precisely the role of a qualified judge and a role that I am certain Chris can fulfill.

Although I never had the pleasure of practicing against Chris, I know many attorneys that have. His reputation as a fair and fierce advocate is rivaled only by his reputation for compassion. Simply put, Chris is highly regarded amongst those who practice against him. As an advocate, there can be no greater compliment than the support of those who argue against you on a daily basis.

Finally, Chris is experienced in campaigning. Having assisted on a number of campaigns, Chris understands what it takes to run a winning race. Should he receive the appointment, I have no doubt that Chris will be able to utilize a wide variety of resources available to him to ensure victory. Given Chris's current career stage, I believe that will allow him to sit on the bench for a

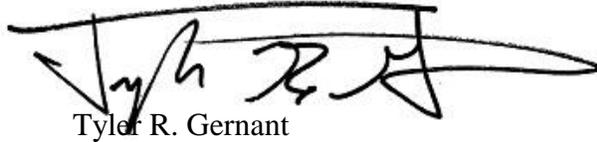
October 14, 2015  
Judicial Nomination Commission  
Page 2 of 2

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very long time and provide years of continuous and stable service to the citizens of the First Judicial District.

I am proud to offer my full recommendation and support to Chris Abbott for this position. Please also accept my gratitude for your consideration of these comments. Should you need additional information for any reason, do not hesitate to contact me.

Very Truly Yours,  
MISSOULA COUNTY CLERK AND TREASURER



Handwritten signature of Tyler R. Gernant, consisting of stylized initials and a long horizontal flourish.

Tyler R. Gernant

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena MT 59620

Members of the Judicial Standards Commission,

I submit this letter in support of nominating Chris Abbott to fill the current vacancy in the First Judicial District. I had the privilege of working alongside Chris at the start of my legal career. Chris is not merely an amazing attorney, he is a teacher, a role model and friend.

As a professional, Chris is driven by a fidelity to the Montana and Federal Constitutions. His zeal for the defense of our most basic civil liberties is a testament to this. He is an asset to his co-workers, providing insights, thoughts and wisdom. Even those who have found themselves on the opposing side of Chris are struck by this young man's talent and intelligence. In short, Chris has a brilliant mind that would be an asset to the First Judicial District.

However, merely being a smart attorney is not enough in the First Judicial District. Chris also has the skills necessary to navigate the intense workload that awaits him as a judge. As a public defender, he has learned to handle an overwhelming caseload, and how to ensure each client receives his fullest attention. Chris understands that legal work does not follow simple nine-to-five hours, but rather requires the extra effort necessary to make sure justice is done in each case. In sum, Chris possesses the work ethic required to tackle a full docket of family law, criminal cases, complex civil litigation and the most important constitutional questions in the State of Montana.

Chris Abbott is a fantastic candidate for judge, and I urge you to move his name forward to the Governor.

Sincerely,

Andres Haladay  
Helena City Commissioner

Jonathan King  
807 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
Helena, MT 50601

October 9, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

RE: First Judicial District Court Appointment

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

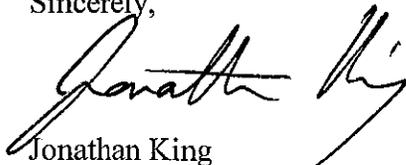
I am writing to recommend Chris Abbott for the vacant First Judicial District Court judgeship. I work alongside Chris in the Office of the State Public Defender in Helena, Montana. Before joining the Office of the State Public Defender, I worked in New York at the law firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher and in the Boston area at the Massachusetts public defender agency. In these offices, I have been mentored by and have worked alongside many capable and intelligent lawyers.

Chris is among the most intelligent and hard-working lawyers I have worked with. Chris has an encyclopedic knowledge of criminal law, including instant recall of cases by name or even citation. Chris also truly enjoys the law: he likes to read it, think about it, and talk about it. He immerses himself in the law and can often be found in his office at night and on weekends, working tirelessly on his cases. Because Chris is a hard worker and a quick study, I have no doubt that he will master civil law as completely as he has criminal law. For this reason, he will be an asset to both the criminal and civil bars.

Chris also has a perfect judicial temperament: he is even-keeled, patient, and attentive. When Chris and I have served as co-counsel on cases, I have been impressed at how measured Chris remains in situations when most others would react emotionally.

I recommend Chris wholeheartedly for the position of district court judge.

Sincerely,

  
Jonathan King

**RECEIVED**  
OCT 14 2015  
COURT ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE  
301 S. PARK

Jennifer C. Kaleczyc  
Attorney at Law  
507 S. Oakes St.  
Helena, MT 59601  
(406) 465-6582

October 14, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
C/o Lois Menzies, Office of the Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 2033005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission Members:

Please accept this letter as my public comment in support of appointment of Chris Abbott to the vacant bench seat in the First Judicial District.

Chris and I began as public defenders at about the same time in 2007, when the statewide public defender system was a little more than a year old. Chris quickly earned a reputation for having a keen legal mind, fierce dedication to his clients, and an unmatched willingness to work hard and long hours. In 2012, I became Chris's supervisor as a Regional Deputy within our agency and Chris continued litigating high level, complex cases in Helena and throughout the state.

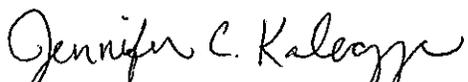
Chris is held in the highest regard within the Office of the Public Defender. Colleagues statewide rely on his expert analytical skills and encyclopedic knowledge of the law. He is called upon to teach continuing legal education courses in complicated areas of law. Despite his high caseload, Chris always makes time to mentor newer attorneys and collaborate with his colleagues on their work.

In addition to his substantial experience as an attorney in the criminal justice system, Chris also has experience with civil law. Prior to becoming a public defender, Chris held the prestigious position of law clerk to the Honorable Judge Browning on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. During his time working for the Ninth Circuit, Chris worked on general civil litigation, civil rights actions, and immigration issues.

Public service is important to Chris. While more lucrative job opportunities are available to him, Chris has chosen a career as a public servant, working to protect the rights of the least among us.

I urge you to forward Chris Abbott's name to Governor Bullock for consideration of appointment to the judgeship in the First Judicial District. He will not disappoint.

Sincerely,

  
Jennifer C. Kaleczyc

William F. Hooks  
Attorney at Law  
2514 Southridge Drive  
Helena, MT 59601  
406-439-1813

October 14, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies, Office of the Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Members of the Commission:

I write to recommend that you forward Chris Abbott's name to Governor Bullock for consideration to replace Judge Sherlock in the First Judicial District. Chris possesses the necessary qualifications and attributes to become a notable District Court judge.

For years, Chris has served the citizens of Montana with distinction as a trial attorney with the Office of the State Public Defender. He is one of the agency's preeminent trial attorneys and has tried complex felony cases in District Courts throughout the state. Chris's legal knowledge of rules and procedures is complete, and his legal ability as a litigator is unsurpassed. Chris has the aptitude to quickly master new areas of the law.

Working in a busy public defender office, Chris is able to effectively handle a heavy work load. He has a strong work ethic, and he would handle a busy court setting.

Chris has the appropriate temperament for a judge. He would approach issues with an open mind, leavened with a strong dose of common sense. Chris would rule with a firm hand, guided by empathy for those who appear before him. Decisions in Chris's court will be based on the facts and the law applicable to those facts.

The people of Montana will be well-served by Chris. He will be an outstanding judge in the First Judicial District.

Sincerely,



William F. Hooks

WFH/bh

October 14, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am writing to urge you to appoint Chris Abbott as a First Judicial District Court Judge.

I have known Chris for nearly eight years. In a lot of ways, Chris and I cut our teeth together, and I am proud to be his friend and colleague. Chris is one of, if not *the* most intelligent attorney with whom I have worked. He is dedicated to his clients and his profession. He excels in complex cases. He understands the nuances of the law and remembers its minutiae with amazing clarity.

Throughout his career, Chris has made time to mentor young attorneys. Barring an imminent briefing deadline or trial, Chris's door is always open to help other people with advice on how to handle a case or situation. More importantly, he treats everyone, whether they are a colleague, opposing counsel, staff or client with respect.

Chris is honest, intelligent, and prides himself on his professionalism and integrity. No one who has worked with Chris holds him in anything but the highest regard. He is thoughtful, articulate, hard-working and fair. Chris will be careful in his decision making and I am confident he will be objective and impartial in upholding the law.

Chris is also a life-long citizen of Helena. With his resume, academic achievements and professional accomplishments, Chris could literally have written his own ticket to practice and make a fortune anywhere in the country. However, he chose to come home to Helena and dedicate his life to public service in our community. We are extremely lucky to have him. A person of Chris's caliber and dedication to the community is exactly what the First Judicial District Court needs in a Judge.

Sincerely,



Dave Burleigh

www.helenalegal.com  
greg@helenalegal.com

Beebe Law Firm  
1085 Helena Avenue  
Helena, Montana 59601

Telephone (406) 442-3625  
Fax (406) 449-6038

October 14, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies, Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

sent via email to [mtsupremecourt@mt.gov](mailto:mtsupremecourt@mt.gov)

Re: *Application of Christopher David Abbott for District Court Judge for the First Judicial District*

Dear Judicial Nomination Committee:

I strongly urge you, without reservation, to nominate and appoint Christopher David Abbott as District Court Judge for the First Judicial District.

I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Abbott at the Office of the State Public Defender while I was an Assistant Public Defender in Helena from 2007 through 2009. Mr. Abbott, of course, is still an attorney in that capacity and has tirelessly committed himself to public service by representing indigent defendants in undoubtedly one of the most challenging legal settings. Mr. Abbott has foregone other more lucrative opportunities in the legal field to represent those most in need. For instance, he has summarily rejected offers to be a partner in my firm in order to continue to help the indigent.

During my tenure at OPD, Mr. Abbott's commitment to justice for the less fortunate was remarkable and always evident in how thoroughly and passionately he represented his clients. There were countless evenings and weekends that Mr. Abbott would sacrifice his family time to work on his client's cases. Mr. Abbott's dedication is unwavering.

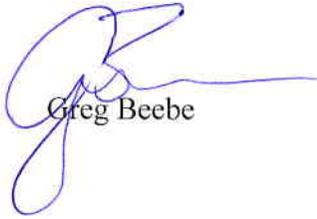
Further, Mr. Abbott's legal ethics are beyond reproach. To this day I often call him in the evenings for advice when ethical issues arise in my practice. Likewise, I am so impressed with his encyclopedic knowledge of criminal law that I often turn to him for help analyzing the most difficult legal issues.

Mr. Abbott has the temperament and legal acumen to be an excellent First Judicial District Judge. His vast experience in criminal law, which is such a large portion of the Court's docket, will certainly benefit him as First Judicial District Judge in his enduring commitment to ensure justice for all.

Judicial Nomination Commission  
October 14, 2015  
Page 2

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours,



Greg Beebe

CHRISTOPHER C. PETAJA  
Petaja Law  
13 S. Willson Ave, Ste 3  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
406-570-0440/406-404-1929(Fax)  
chris@petajalaw.com

October 14, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

RE: Christopher Abbott nomination to replace retiring Honorable Judge Jeffery Sherlock

To the Judicial Nomination Commission,

It is my pleasure to write this letter to recommend Christopher Abbott (Chris) to be appointed as district judge in the First Judicial District, Lewis and Clark County. My understanding is that the Honorable Judge Jeffery Sherlock is retiring. I first came to know Chris when I was interning at the Office of the Public Defender (OPD) in Helena in 2006. It was immediately apparent from working with him that Chris had a very strong understanding of the law even as a newly practicing attorney. While I didn't work on any cases directly with Chris that summer, he was always happy to field any questions I had regarding the cases and motions I was working on.

From 2008 to 2013, I was employed as a deputy public defender in Bozeman, Montana. Chris worked for the OPD at the time in other regions and for major crimes. One of the first people I always turned to for complex legal advice was Chris. It was apparent from intersystem e-mails that the same was true for many attorneys in the OPD system at the time. Chris always had a keen understanding of the plain language of statutes and was knowledgeable, off hand, of the relevant case law. My experience with Chris is he always professional and a reasonable attorney who worked well with opposing counsel. Being a native Montanan, I always felt Chris embraced the Montana approach to resolving conflicts. I truly believe he will bring the same to the bench as a knowledgeable, understanding, and compassionate judge.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding my recommendation. Personally, I feel Chris is more than qualified for the opening district judge position in Helena and would be a great access to the Montana judicial branch in the years to come.

Sincerely,  
*Christopher Petaja*  
Christopher C. Petaja, Esq.



# Montana House of Representatives

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies  
Office of Court Administrator  
PO Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

To the Honorable Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am writing to offer my support for Christopher Abbott to fill the First Judicial District Judgeship vacancy. I have known Chris for a number of years and have a strong belief that his dedication and temperament are a strong fit for this position.

Chris has a strong commitment to public service. In his eight years serving as a public defender he has been a tremendous advocate for the constitutional rights of those most in need in our society. In a department that is increasingly underfunded and understaffed, Chris takes up the heavy workload because he sincerely cares. Courts in Lewis and Clark County are already short on judges and resources so having a hard worker like Chris Abbott on the bench is exactly what is needed.

In addition to his work ethic, Chris has proven that he has the skills and experience to be an excellent judge. He graduated with high honors from the University of Washington and clerked for the Ninth Circuit. As a public defender he has participated in a tremendous amount of serious criminal cases, including twenty-three jury trials.

Perhaps the strongest reason I can recommend Chris Abbott for this position is his understanding and compassion for the people that find themselves in our court system. It is so easy to dismiss a person because they are arrested or are appearing in front of a judge. Chris will understand how his actions and the court system can have dramatic affects on the lives of Montanans. I believe we need someone in this role who will do everything they can to combat systematic bias and carefully measure the facts in each case.

For all these reasons I am incredibly honored to recommend Chris Abbott for this important post.

Sincerely,

Rep. Bryce Bennett  
House District 91 – Minority Whip

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:13 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Stephanie Robles [<mailto:stephanie.d.robles@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 4:56 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:**

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Committee:

Please accept this letter as my public comment in support of Christopher Abbott receiving a recommendation from the Judicial Nominating Commission for the vacant judgeship in the First Judicial District Court.

I have been acquainted with Chris through my employment at the Office of Public Defender since 2012. In 2014, I relocated to the Helena Office of Public Defender and have had the opportunity to work with, and learn from, Chris.

Chris is a dedicated, hardworking, knowledgeable attorney. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Chris' broad and extensive knowledge of the law, analytical skills, and commitment to the fair and ethical practice of law. Chris is very thorough and detailed in his practice of law and does not hesitate to take on challenges for the benefit of his clients. For these reasons, I often approach Chris to seek advice and feedback and he always makes time to listen.

I have no doubt that Chris would also utilize these qualities as a judge to be fair, impartial, meticulous, ethical, and well-researched in his opinions and decisions in order to uphold justice for our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Robles

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:15 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

From: Jennifer Streano [<mailto:streano@hotmail.com>]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 4:24 PM  
To: MT Supreme Court,  
Subject: Public Comment- Abbott

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

This letter is to express my sincere recommendation for Mr. Abbott for the vacant judgeship in the First Judicial District.

I have worked with Mr. Abbott for many years on many criminal cases. He, without question, is the most intelligent, fair and dedicated attorney I have had the privilege to work with. He encompasses all traits necessary to be a fair and impartial district court judge. He treats clients, court staff, and opposing counsel with the utmost respect throughout all legal proceedings.

Lewis and Clark County would be very well served with Mr. Abbott as its next District Court Judge.

Sincerely,

Jennifer E. Streano  
Assistant Training Coordinator  
Office of State Public Defender

Sent from my iPhone

Sent from my iPhone

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:08 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Sandra Kailey [<mailto:samimwk@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 9:02 AM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Judicial appointment for Christopher Abbott

This young man is a prime example of what is right about today's generation. He he is honest, dedicated, full of integrity, and willing to work hard to get the job done right. Sandra MW Kailey of Missoula Montana

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:08 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Katie Carlson [<mailto:carlson.katiejo@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 13, 2015 9:04 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,; [carlson.katiejo@gmail.com](mailto:carlson.katiejo@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Christopher Abbott

Katie Carlson, Esq.

P.O. Box 8307

Missoula, MT 59807

October 13, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to give my full endorsement of Christopher Abbott for First Judicial District Judge. I first met Chris while attending Capital High School and found him to be an authentic, kind individual. Now, knowing Chris as an attorney I know him to be the same kind individual who continues to care deeply for justice and about those that he represents.

Chris has devoted his career to representing those in need. His work for the public defender's office is a testament to his desire to help others and that he truly believes all should have access to representation when they are accused of a crime. I believe that Chris' strong belief in justice system is what would make him a superb judge. I believe he will be fair, professional and ethical in his judgment and that the Helena community would be lucky to have him.

Sincerely,



Katie Carlson, Esq.

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:06 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Eric M. Brewer [<mailto:ebrewer@bridgeband.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 12:54 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Christopher Abbott Nomination

Members of the Judicial Nominating Committee:

I write to strongly encourage you to forward Mr. Abbott' application to Governor Bullock for consideration for appointment to the soon to be vacant judicial position in the First Judicial District Court.

Now in private practice, I served as a public defender for approximately ten years, first for the Gallatin County Public Defender's Office and then for the Office of the State Public Defender (OPD), Region Eight. I met Mr. Abbott shortly after he began working for the OPD.

When Mr. Abbott was with the Major Crimes Unit of the OPD, I had the privilege of serving with him as co-counsel in *State v. Guy*, DC-11-193, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court, Yellowstone County, a deliberate homicide case. Mr. Abbott impressed me as few attorneys have with his superior research and writing abilities, his skills with witnesses, his courtroom abilities, and his compassion for our client and our client's family. As trial approached, many last minute and very important legal issues arose. Mr. Abbott handled all of these issues thoroughly and quickly, often sending me drafts of briefs (to which I had very little to add because of Mr. Abbott's impressive research and writing abilities) well after midnight and be fresh and ready to go first thing in the morning.

During my tenure with the OPD, Mr. Abbott was well known as the OPD attorney to contact when one was faced with a unique legal question. The reason for this was because Mr. Abbott had researched so many different issues with such thoroughness, we knew we could rely on his thoughts and advice. I know that some of us in the OPD, Region Eight Office sometimes felt bad for asking him for help on our cases because we knew he had he own very full caseload and knew that we were not the only attorneys seeking his counsel. However, when we did reach out to him, Mr. Abbott was very giving with his time and would often do independent research to assist in any way he could.

If Mr. Abbott is appointed to the bench, it will be a loss to the bar in general and to the indigent defense bar in particular. With that said, I believe to appoint Mr. Abbott to the judicial seat in the First Judicial District Court would be a service to justice, fairness, and the Constitution of the State of Montana and the Constitution of the United States.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eric M. Brewer, Attorney and Counselor at Law  
BREWER LAW FIRM, P.L.L.C.  
13 South Willson, Suite 3  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406) 570-6664

[ebrewer@bridgeband.com](mailto:ebrewer@bridgeband.com)

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## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:07 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

From: Quint Nyman [<mailto:quint@mympea.org>]  
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 11:35 AM  
To: Cook, Kevin  
Subject: Christopher Abbott: 1st Judicial Court Nominee

Dear Judicial Nominations Commission,  
Please consider this communication as support for the nomination of Christopher Abbott for the 1st Judicial Court.

In the time I have known Christopher I have found him to be a dedicated public employee with 8 years of service to the public defender system. As you know, this is a thankless job with long hours and low pay- and as a result a great deal of turnover. Christopher has looked past those issues and instead has stayed close to the work because it has value.

Christopher has proven himself to be intelligent and compassionate with an eye towards the dignity of humankind. His experience in the court room has proven itself with a large number of court appearances throughout the state of Montana. Additionally, Christopher's educational success and background makes him a standout.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation and of Christopher's application, he would indeed make a great additional to Montana's court systems if appointed.

Sincerely,  
Quint Nyman

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:07 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Nick D [<mailto:ndomitrovich@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 9:43 AM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Christopher Abbott application

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to add my recommendation to the broad array of individuals who support Christopher Abbott's application for the soon-to-be vacant position in the 1st Judicial District.

I met Chris for the first time when I began work as an appellate defender and he worked upstairs in the trial division. Despite inherent tension between our respective offices due to occasional ineffective assistance of counsel claims we were required to raise, Chris immediately became a valued resource to this new attorney. Whenever I found something in a transcript that didn't seem quite right, Chris was always my first stop. I soon realized that he performed this function for nearly all of the attorneys in the whole building.

Chris is extraordinarily hardworking, possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of Montana law, and approaches everyone—regardless of who they are—with respect and decency. He would be a great asset on the bench. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Chris' qualifications.

Nicholas Domitrovich  
Helena

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:14 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Jenny Eck [<mailto:jennyeck4mt@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 4:31 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** In Support of Christopher Abbott, First Judicial District Judge Nominee

Dear members of the Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for Chris. Chris would make an excellent district court judge. I know him to be fair-minded and extremely hard working. He has a passion for public service. As a public defender, Chris has shown great compassion for those who use the justice system and has worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone he represents has equal access to the law. I believe it is critical that we have judges in our district who take seriously the rights of the accused and the imperative of due process. Chris understands that this is the foundation of our justice system.

I know that Chris also used to work as a law clerk for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. I believe this experience gives Chris the kind of insight that a judge requires. I also know that Chris understands the role that class and poverty play in our justice system and he is sensitive to those realities. He has a reputation for being fair and knowledgeable and I believe he would make an excellent judge. We would be lucky to have him.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jenny Eck  
PO Box 1206  
Helena, MT 59624

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:03 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Buddy Rutzke [<mailto:brutzke@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 3:59 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Comment re Chris Abbott for First Judicial District

Judicial Nomination Commission

c/o Lois Menzies

Office of Court Administrator

P.O. Box 203005

Helena, MT 59620-3005

[mtsupremecourt@mt.gov](mailto:mtsupremecourt@mt.gov)

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission,

I am writing to ask that you nominate Chris Abbott for the judgeship currently vacant in Lewis and Clark County. Mr. Abbott has the experience and characteristics that would make him an outstanding judge, and he would interpret and apply the law with the utmost skill, wisdom, and fairness. He would base his rulings upon outstanding analysis and knowledge, would mete out thoughtful remedies that are designed to best achieve the outcomes intended by the law, and every attorney who practiced in his court, and every clerk who would have the privilege to learn under his mentorship, would come out of his court with improved skills and knowledge.

Mr. Abbott has an encyclopedic knowledge in the law informed by and applied via outstanding analysis and a great ability to consider the merits of many arguments. I have worked with Mr. Abbott for almost two years now. As a new attorney with a caseload that grew with overwhelming speed, I depend greatly on the mentorship of my colleagues. I have been lucky enough to sit two doors down from Mr. Abbott. When I hit a particularly difficult legal issue, I will often pop into his office and can depend on him producing either an authoritative answer or at least an excellent place to start on research, complete with a citation to authority from memory. But, he will also listen closely to and analyze arguments that counter his initial conclusions. Sometimes he will peer over his glasses at you with an incredulous look as your argument unfolds (such expressions themselves

appear to be an invaluable tool for skilled judges), but he never fails to give the arguments due weight and succinctly explain why he agrees or disagrees.

Mr. Abbott also cares deeply about justice and the integrity of the adversarial process. He has foregone financial gain and shouldered great stress in defending clients who are unable to afford private counsel. He has done so because he knows that the integrity of our adversarial process, and the procedural and substantive constitutional provisions to which it gives effect, would lose integrity and meaning without excellent advocacy representing both sides of an argument. He would bring the same respect for the integrity of the law to the bench.

I can think of no one who embodies the characteristics and wisdom necessary to make a person an excellent judge more than Mr. Abbott. Our legal system, the parties in his court, and the members of the bar practicing in his court would all benefit from the nomination of such a skilled, knowledgeable, and thoughtful person to the bench in the First Judicial Court.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Buddy Rutzke

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Buddy Rutzke | Esq., MSW

## Cook, Kevin

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**From:** Menzies, Lois  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 8:13 PM  
**To:** Cook, Kevin  
**Subject:** Public Comment -- Abbott

**From:** Davina Attar [<mailto:davina.attar@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 14, 2015 1:55 PM  
**To:** MT Supreme Court,  
**Subject:** Christopher Abbott

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

This letter is to support and recommend Christopher Abbott for the district court judge vacancy in the First Judicial District. I worked with Mr. Abbott for 3 years at the Office of the Public Defender in Helena, MT. During this time, I was able to get to know Mr. Abbott well, and gain an appreciation for his overarching legal knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Abbott holds himself to an incredibly high standard, and when he appears in court, he is the most knowledgeable person in the room on any aspect of the law that may come up. Mr. Abbott is not swayed by emotion; instead, he is very analytical with an even-keeled temperament. I have no doubt that, as a judge, Mr. Abbott would be wholly impartial and hold all parties that appeared in front of him to the same high standards to which he holds himself to.

Mr. Abbott is an incredibly hardworking and thorough attorney. He has a vast amount of experience both litigating complex cases and conducting extensive motions practice. As a result of his knowledge, intellect, and character, Mr. Abbott has gained universal respect from judges, prosecutors and defense counsel in the First Judicial District.

I, too, have the utmost respect for Mr. Abbott, and cannot recommend him highly enough for the vacant judgeship. I know that he would be a great fit for the position and ask that you strongly consider forwarding his application to Governor Bullock.

Best,  
Davina Attar

October 13, 2015

Judicial Nomination Commission  
c/o Lois Menzies, Office of the Court Administrator  
P.O. Box 203005  
Helena, MT 59620-3005

Re: Public Comment on 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court Nomination of Christopher D. Abbott

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission Members,

My name is Bradley F. Custer and I am an Assistant Attorney General for the Child Protection Unit in Kalispell, Montana. This is my letter of support for Christopher D. Abbott filling the soon-to-be-vacant District Court Judge position in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Court for Lewis and Clark County.

I have known Chris for the past five and half years while we worked together at the Montana Office of Public Defender in Helena. During this time, I have found Chris to be one of the most diligent, hardworking, and intelligent attorneys in the State of Montana. Chris knows the law as well as any attorney, both criminal and civil. His insight, recall, and research ability into the law is nothing short of amazing. His openness, compassion, and consideration for others is reflected not in just how he treats his clients, but in how he provides tremendous support to fellow attorneys, staff and others in the legal system. I strongly believe Chris is an excellent candidate for this position and strongly support his nomination.

Thank you for your time. Please contact me if there is any other information you might want.



Bradley F. Custer  
Assistant Attorney General  
Child Protection Unit – Kalispell, MT  
Work #406-751-2493  
Cell #406-250-5343