

AMBER INEZ JOHNSON

418 N Benton Ave • Apt Y • Helena, MT 59601

406-594-2107 • amberinezjohnson@gmail.com

August 29, 2020

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

To Whom It May Concern:

I am recommending Mary Cochenour for appointment as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District of Montana.

Mary and I met in 2017 and worked together on a project when I was employed with the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and she was employed as the Assistant Attorney General for the State of Montana. She was a pleasure to work with; kind, humble, intelligent, and reliable.

Since that time, I've had the privilege of seeing Mary speak and present at multiple functions and events. She is incredibly articulate, engaging, and inspiring. I was so impressed with her, that I asked her to speak at the Women's Leadership Network of Helena's 2019 Resilience Conference.

Mary has the best temperament for being a judge. She's practical, level-headed, articulate, conscientious, hard-working, and wise. Her varied life experiences give her a perspective on life that is valuable for this kind of position. Not only that, but she's an incredibly talented public speaker. She would be such a gift to our community as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District of Montana.

Sincerely,

Amber Johnson

Helena Resident, Board Chair, and Small Business Owner

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2020 7:49 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Aimee Grmoljez <agrmoljez@crowleyfleck.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2020 1:40 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Cc: Grmoljez, Amy
Subject: [EXTERNAL] I support Mary Cochenour

Dear Nominating Committee,

Thank you for your work in reviewing judicial nominees for the open district court seat. I am writing to strongly support Mary Cochenour for this judicial nomination.

I have known Mary professionally and personally for almost eight years. Mary is a brilliantly focused and incredibly hard worker. I clerked for federal Judge Molloy during his first years on the bench and I learned early that justice is not always easy to apply and the law needs judges who are temperate, hard working, thoughtful and know how to apply the law evenly and fairly.

Mary is a strong prosecutor as evidenced from her award - Prosecutor of the Year. Her ability to balance her prosecutorial work with her pro bono work was evidenced by her winning the Pro Bono lawyer of the Year as well! She is a passionate lawyer -whether prosecuting or helping those who need it most as a pro bono lawyer- and I know she will bring these qualities of passion and judicial fairness to the bench. We also know Mary as a ski friend and while I personally cannot keep up with her (my husband can!) I have seen her instrumental skills as a teacher to friends and family with her ski experience. I know she will use this same teaching ability with lawyers and citizens that come before the bench in a kind and thoughtful manner. The role of judge needs to be one who applies the law, teaches on the law to all who enter the court and shows passion to the law and equality. I believe Mary would be the type of judge discussed above and one we would all want to have on the bench! I am grateful for the opportunity to support Mary Cochenour for the judicial nomination!

Best,

Aimee Grmoljez
Partner at Crowleyfleck law firm
406-4595958

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Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Sunday, August 30, 2020 7:48 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Jimmy W <jimmyweg@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, August 29, 2020 12:50 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] District Judge Applicants

I had the pleasure for working with Mary Cochenour, Dan Guzynski, and Ole Olson over a number of years when I served as an Agent for MTDOJ. Each of the candidates served as a prosecutor and legal liaison to the Computer Crime Unit, which I headed for about 17 years. Montanans will be served well by any of these applicants. Their ability to comprehend and address the most technical aspects of computer crime was outstanding, and they presented our cases in court with remarkable clarity.

Equally important was their fairness in evaluating cases. As you know, investigators and prosecutors may have different views on the merits of cases. Over many years, I've had my share of such debates with prosecutors, but these applicants judged my unit's work based on sound reasoning and the standards required by the criminal justice system. It was easy for me to respect their decisions, which impressed me with being correct.

Each of the applicants were well prepared for court. They treated all parties respectfully and presented our cases professionally. It seemed plain to me that district court judges across the state respected the courtroom presentations of these prosecutors. While I can't speak to the civil side of the law, I can say that the briefs and motions that the applicants prepared were well reasoned and expressed the state's positions persuasively.

Having appeared in dozens of courts across the state, I would have no hesitation about participating in a proceeding over which any of these candidates presided. Thanks for considering my views.

Jimmy Weg
Helena, MT

Sent from [Mail \[go.microsoft.com\]](mailto:jimmyweg@yahoo.com) for Windows 10

MISSOURI RIVER LAW OFFICE P.C.

70 Craig Main Street, Suite B, Craig, Montana 59648
Telephone (406) 235-4000 • DID (406) 235-4080 • kblazer@missouririverlaw.com

August 31, 2020

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

Re: Applicant Mary Cochenour (Judge Reynolds position)

Dear Commission:

I am submitting this letter as public comment to support the application of Mary Cochenour for the position of judge which is becoming vacant due to the retirement of Judge Reynolds.

I have been practicing law for over 36 years, and consider myself as a barrister more than a solicitor, appearing in courts all over the northwest region of the United States. I have been licensed as a lawyer in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. These facts are mentioned only because I have appeared in a variety of courts, and before a large and diverse number of judges. Thus my experience as a trial lawyer (civil and criminal cases) has provided me with insight into what makes a good judge in many courtroom settings.

I met Mary Cochenour when she was a deputy county attorney in Lewis & Clark County. She was the prosecutor in a number of cases in which I represented the defendant, on a private retainer basis. I also tried a case - jury trial - with Mary as opposing counsel. Jury trials are intensive matters, and friction often arises between opposing counsel. Trying a case against Mary was an excellent experience from many standpoints, even though Mary's side of the case prevailed. I always learn from a jury trial, and the lessons learned from Mary included being impressed with her fairness and integrity, and also her knowledge and skill as a lawyer.

We worked opposite on other cases when Mary was still with the county attorney's office and always managed to find a resolution which both of our principals found acceptable.

Mary was always a fair and compassionate prosecutor.

In light of my enormous respect for Mary, I continued to follow her career in the years following our time of sharing cases. On occasion, I would "court watch" when Mary would try some of the high profile cases to which she was most deservedly assigned. I always found her to be not only a thorough and competent trial lawyer, but also one who was not afraid to think outside the box and use creative ways to accomplish the fine art of persuasion.

Each of the talents I have mentioned would make for a fine judge. The ability to be fair, to always employ integrity when working with others, and with issues of high jingo, to be thorough and competent in the law, and to find creative and compassionate ways to address the multitude of issues coming before a district court judge, who wears many hats.

In summary, I recommend Mary Cochenour without reservation and with the highest degree of respect and confidence that she would be an outstanding judge for Helena, for Montana and for this country.

Sincerely yours,

KRISTI BLAZER

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kristi Blazer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MISSOURI RIVER LAW OFFICE P.C.

Katie Harper Jerstad
536 N. Davis St. Helena, MT 59601
(406) 544-4227
katieharper80@gmail.com

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

August 31, 2020

Greetings Ms. Menzies,

I'm writing this letter in support of Mary Cochenour's application to the Judicial Nomination Commission for appointment to the bench in the First Judicial District of Montana, Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties. I've known Mary for over twelve years and consider her a thoughtful mentor. I've been a deputy county attorney in Lewis and Clark County for twelve years and am familiar with the district court judges' crowded schedule and demanding workload. I can attest, from having worked with Mary, that she is a hard working and dedicated public servant ready to take on the exhausting schedule and endless work-load of a district court judge.

Before working together, I met Mary on several occasions during which time, without knowing me well at all, she exuded warmth and friendliness, a willingness to share advice, and empathy with a recent law school grad considering a move to Helena. Since that time, I've seen her do the same with many others, be it crime victims or opposing counsel. She never passes up an opportunity to engage with others and cultivate leadership among attorneys and non-attorneys alike. These qualities will ensure those appearing in her courtroom will be treated with respect, fairness, and empathy.

After serving as a public defender, Mary's career overlapped with mine for four years at the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office where we had neighboring offices in the basement annex, or "dungeon" as some like to call it. Starting as a civil deputy handling litigation, she moved over to the criminal side where she juggled a grueling court schedule and caseload of misdemeanors and felonies, while being willing to take on dependent neglect (cases involving abused or neglected children) or involuntary commitments (cases involving the seriously mentally ill) when the need arose. Knowing the nuts and bolts of these types of cases will give Mary a leg up as judge because those types of cases fill at least two-thirds of the judges' weekly schedule. She raised her hand to join the first adult treatment court team as the prosecution representative and continues to believe in its mission. Her willingness to take on additional challenges will make her an asset to the bench, especially considering the two treatment courts the Honorable Judge Reynolds will be leaving behind.

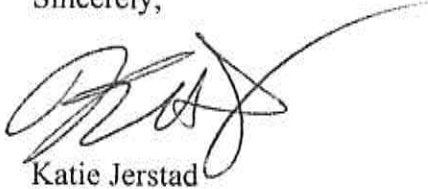
As an Assistant Attorney General traveling the state to work complex cases for the Prosecution Services Bureau, Mary had the opportunity to get to know many judges and how they run their courtrooms. Having this experience across multiple jurisdictions will allow her to bring together the best practices she's seen and run a courtroom exceptionally well.

Perhaps what stands out most to me about Mary is her life experience prior to prosecuting. Before our paths crossed in clerkships and the county attorney's office, Mary had already gained an impressive breadth of experiences that will serve her well as judge. Mary's professional experience as a journalist prior to becoming a lawyer and her physical accomplishments as a trail runner and hiker set her apart from other candidates and make her uniquely qualified to be a district judge in the First Judicial District. Mary would always consider an issue from every angle, harkening back to her days as a reporter. She'd thoroughly and efficiently research an issue to get to her answer in a timely manner. She does not let things stew – she knows how to be decisive and

make up her mind. Once a matter was decided, Mary frequently could be heard typing quickly and loudly on her keyboard, a habit developed as a reporter under deadline.

Being thoughtful yet decisive is not a trait everyone has – and it is precisely what a judge needs to be. Judges often suffer decision-exhaustion from having to decide difficult issues all day long. Mary is inexhaustible. After working as a law clerk in Nevada during the day, she'd join a group of trail runners and run into the mountains for 15+ miles. While prosecuting cases across the State, Mary was able to start a guiding business and parent two kids. Mary's been able to weave her passion for the outdoors into her professional life in the last several years. She's mastered the art of balancing the demands of her job, her family and her pastimes. With this, there is no question Mary has the mental and physical stamina for the difficult decision-making of a judge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Jerstad', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Katie Jerstad

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 7:55:29 PM

From: Angela Grove <agrove7232@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 4:15 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] District Judge Vacancies-Cochenour

After seeing the article in the local newspaper this week, I felt compelled to urge your support for Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Judge vacancy. Mary's passion and tenacity in all her pursuits are the type of energy and commitment needed for this position. I have know Mary for over 10 years as an important member of our community as well as a local neighbor. Her work ethic and ability to be prepared for all situations is readily apparent and has been reflected in her legal service to the public as well as to those of us who share her passion for outdoor recreation pursuits.

I served 25 years in Montana Legislative Auditor's Office and have lived in Helena since 1980. Public and community service are vitally important to me. I have served on numerous board and volunteer efforts and currently serve as chair of the Montana State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board. Throughout these experiences, both professionally and personally, you come to recognize the leadership qualities that are invaluable and necessary for positive outcomes in any realm. Mary has these qualities and would apply those to serve as effective, thoughtful, and hard-working judge. I strongly urge your support for her application to create a win-win for us in Broadwater and Lewis & Clark counties.

Sincerely,
Angie Grove

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 7:54:54 PM

From: Scott Darkenwald <scott.darkenwald@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 2:36 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mary Cochenour/District Court

c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
PO Box 203005
Helena, Mt 59620-3005

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Scott Darkenwald and I am writing this letter of recommendation for Mary Cochenour. I came to know Mary when I was Attorney General Tim Fox's Chief of Staff, most of his first term.

First , I would like to speak to her work ethic, which was extraordinary . Our offices were close together and I passed hers coming and leaving the DOJ. I worked long hours and it was obvious so did Mary. Seemed like we lived in that building.

Mary was highly regarded by her colleagues and her direct report Brant Light. Brant held a very high bar of expectations and you could see by Mary's assignments how he felt about her skills as a prosecutor.

Mary was tenacious , disciplined and and a woman of great integrity. Though clearly skilled and bright it was her heart that captured my attention. That heart of a public servant and an understanding what a privilege it is to serve. She belongs in public service.

I also had the opportunity to see Mary as a mother and wife which just further confirmed what I knew about her as a human being ... someone special. She belongs serving the people of Montana and I highly recommend her for this role she desires to step into.

Don't hesitate to call me if you would like !

Respectfully,
Scott D

Scott Darkenwald
scott.darkenwald@gmail.com
PO Box 463
Whitefish, Mt 59937
406-212-3355

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 7:54:13 PM

From: Sara Berg <sara@bkbh.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 7:08 AM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Mary Cochenour

Dear Nomination Committee,

Thank you for your time and service on this committee in reviewing judicial nominees for open court seats.

Please accept this email as my support for Mary Cochenour for the position in the First Judicial District Judge, soon to be vacated by Hon. James Reynolds.

My name is Sara Berg and I am an attorney at Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry and Hoven, P.C. I have practiced as an attorney at BKBH and in Helena for 20 years as of this past August.

I have known of Mary professionally for many years and have been lucky enough to get to know her personally as well. Quite simply, Mary is all things you could want in a Judge. She is focused, fair, hard-working, and if not equally or more important- even tempered and incredibly good natured. She has shown herself to be a standout amongst standouts- publicly recognized for her tireless work as a prosecutor and universally respected by her colleagues in the legal community. She is also entrenched and involved in the greater community as well – as a volunteer doing pro bono work for Montana Legal Services and as a committed parent of young children. I can also personally attest to Mary's commitment to the empowerment of others- I would have never believed I could have survived the group backpacking excursion for which she served as leader - and quite frankly, would not attempt another without her at the helm!

Anyone who has seen a Judge at work knows they must be fair, bright, organized, a leader, kind and compassionate. I would struggle to find a person that checks all these boxes as well as Mary Cochenour.

Thank you for the opportunity to publicly provide my support for Mary!

Sincerely,

Sara S. Berg
Partner, BKBH, PC
406-439-1177

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 7:55:57 PM

From: Meghan Bronec <meghanbronec@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 6:56 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mary Cochenour - District Court Judge Recommendation

Dear Commissioners,

It is my honor and pleasure to support Mary Cochenour for appointment as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District of Montana.

I have lived, worked, and volunteered in the Helena community for the majority of my life. I have two children in the Helena School District, work as a Certified Public Accountant, and serve on the Helena Food Share Board of Directors. In each of these roles I have seen the necessity of fair, hardworking, impartial public servants. I would be hard-pressed to find someone I trust more to apply the law with integrity and compassion than Mary Cochenour.

Mary exemplifies both hard-work and a love for the greater Helena Community. While you are no-doubt aware of her many accolades and esteem in the legal field, you may be unaware of her passion to help others, and specifically women, succeed outside that realm. For the past several years, Mary has led groups of women backpacking in the Montana wilderness. To be clear, Mary is not a guide, but rather a coach helping to prepare the often first time backpackers for success and safety in the woods. For me personally, Mary coached me to summit the highest peak in the "lower 48", Mount Whitney, with no prior hiking experience. Mary's enthusiasm for helping others to succeed has been recognized both across the state and the country. (Mary was the Keynote Speaker for the Women Leading Montana Convention in 2018 and was personally chosen by backpacking royalty Andrew Skurka to join his team as one of two female guides.)

If Mary's legacy as a tough prosecutor and empowerer of women weren't enough, she also volunteers for Girls Thrive, helping young girls gain confidence through learning outdoor skills, and is a committed parent to two young children. Mary is a true gem in the Helena community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my full support for Mary. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Kind regards,

Meghan Bronec



Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office

406 Fuller Ave. • Helena, MT 59601

Office 406-447-8235

Fax 406-449-8452

Sheriff-Coroner Leo C. Dutton

Undersheriff Jason T. Grimmis

September 1, 2020

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

Please accept my nomination letter for Mary Cochenour for District Court Judge, to replace the Honorable Judge Reynolds.

I have been with the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office for 35 years. Eleven of those years, I worked as a reserve deputy and the rest have been full-time. On September 2, 2008, I became the Sheriff of Lewis and Clark County and continue to serve in that capacity today. During my career, I have had the opportunity to interact with many different district court judges. I've testified in many different cases, from murder trials to driving under the influence cases and physical abuse cases. I offer all this background to say that I know what professionalism and competence look like as demonstrated by many judges.

I first became acquainted with Mary more than a decade ago, when she worked as a Deputy County Attorney in Lewis and Clark County. In the courtroom, Mary has always been on point, decorous when dealing with all, making everyone feel comfortable and at ease in the most stressful times. She is well prepared and knowledgeable about the facts of the cases she handles. She is an ardent student of the law, its interpretation, and its application to the cases she handled. Mary has little tolerance for perfidy or ostentatious behavior in the courtroom. But as I have mentioned above, she has a way of endearing herself to those that she comes in contact with. Once she locks into her delivery to a jury, her vernacular is clear and delivered with passion and purpose.

While Mary was working at the Attorney General's Office, she handled several cases in Lewis and Clark County due to conflicts that arose with the County Attorney's Office. In one such case, *State v. Campbell*, I witnessed Mary lead a very complex homicide investigation and trial. There were many twists and turns as the case proceeded forward. At that time, the coroner had misplaced evidence that surfaced in the hours before trial. I was impressed with Mary's equanimity to handle the aberrancy while still keeping the case moving forward. After a hung jury, the team she led secured a plea agreement for negligent homicide, putting to rest a long-standing dispute in the Dearborn watershed. During this case, Mary demonstrated compassion for the victim and respect for the court and the judicial process. Working with Mary in this case, we learned ways to improve our investigations.

From my perspective, judges should exemplify core values. These values have been the hallmark that allows decisions to be made without bias or prejudicial preferential treatment. People who sit in a position of judgment should have professionalism, loyalty to the law, accountability to their decisions, compassion for all those involved, the courage to do the right thing when it is not popular, and the integrity to hold oneself true to their word.

I highly recommend Mary Cochenour for the District Court Judge position as she demonstrates by her behavior that she possesses all the core values as described above. The Helena community and the First Judicial District would be well served to have Mary as a District Court judge.

I am available for questions to solidify any statements that I offer in support of Mary Cochenour for District Court judge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leo C. Dutton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Leo C. Dutton, Sheriff/Coroner

HUNT & FOX PLLP

Attorneys at Law

James G. Hunt
Patrick T. Fox

310 East Broadway St.
Helena, MT 59601
Telephone: (406) 442-8552
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jhunt@huntlaw.net
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William E. Hunt, Sr.
(1923-2016)

September 2, 2020

Judicial Nomination Commission
c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
PO Box 203005
Helena MT 59620-3005
Via email: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

Re: Letter of support for Mary Cochenour for First Judicial District Judgeship

Dear Judicial Nomination Committee:

I wholehearted recommend Mary Cochenour for appointment to the bench.

I have known Mary since law school. Mary has the rare ability to endure suffering (i.e., the rigors of law school, the demands of a prosecutor of high-profile cases, arduous outdoor adventures, parenthood, etc.) while staying happy and concerned more about the needs of others than her own needs.

As I describe below, the factors that motivate my support for Mary are her thoughtful consideration of her professional responsibilities as a prosecutor, her respect for the law, her consideration for the fairness which the law demands, and her proven ability to manage the demands of multiple activities effectively and efficiently. These character traits are foundational requirements for an effective judicial temperament and Mary has them in spades.

As advocates, lawyers risk losing the “forest for the trees” if they do not, at least occasionally, extract themselves from the role of client-advocate to examine bigger-picture considerations, including the perspectives, circumstances, and rights of those opposed to them. Mary does not suffer from such myopia. Her ability to remain cognizant of the bigger picture—and the purpose of the laws she is tasked to enforce—is a critical competency of a judge.

While Mary served as a prosecutor, I had several conversations with her over the years about her experiences and her thoughts about a prosecutor’s role generally. From those conversations three things remain evident: (1) to Mary, the accused’s constitutional rights demand as much consideration as the societal protection resultant from a conviction; (2) the “People,” i.e., society, that Mary serves includes the person accused of the crime; and (3) Mary’s job, from her perspective, was not to judge the accused (the jury’s role) but, rather, to exercise sound

Judicial Nomination Commission
September 2, 2020
Re: Support of Mary Cochenour for Judicial Appointment
Page 2 of 2

discretion in choosing which cases to prosecute and then compile and present the evidence to meet her burden of proof, all in the context of a fair process.

After a long trial wherein Mary and her colleagues had secured the conviction of a recidivist criminal, Mary expressed satisfaction not because of the conviction but because the the accused had received a fairly tried on the crime alleged, not his extensive criminal past. For Mary, justice is not a conviction but, rather, a fair trial.

Outside of the legal profession, Mary has been involved as an active servant in the community. As her resume shows, Mary had a significant professional history prior to law school working in the outdoors. To share her passion and knowledge in this arena, Mary has for many years now organized backpacking trips for women in the community who desire to backpack but lack the know-how. It is also worth noting that Mary serves as a professional guides for backpacking trips all over the United States for a recognized outdoor backpacking company in Colorado.

Despite these professional pursuits and community activities, Mary has been an incredibly active with her husband, daughter and son. Facebook evidences of nearly continuous adventures of Mary and her family.

These references to Mary's ability to manage and excel in various activities at once is not just window dressing. Increasingly, as Montana's counties grow while its judiciary remains constant, Montana judges must handle more cases with fewer resources. Mary's extensive knowledge in the criminal realm, her ability to absorb new areas, and her exceptional time management skills will undoubtedly assist her in maintaining an orderly and timely docket.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick T. Fox", with a stylized flourish at the end.

PATRICK T. FOX



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The Montana Judicial Nomination Commission c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
PO Box 203005

Helena, MT 59620-3005
Email: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

Re: Mary Cochenour Letter of Support

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am honored to write a letter of support for Mary Cochenour. She is highly qualified for the position of Lewis and Clark County District Court Judge.

As the President of George's Distributing, I have been a business leader in Helena for the last 19 years. My family business has been in business for 3 generations and we are all active members of our community. I have known Mary for the last 9 years as a friend and fellow professional mother of school-age children.

It is difficult to keep this recommendation brief as Mary has lived a truly extraordinary life. Not only does Mary have an extensive legal resume. Her path in life has given her a depth of knowledge that should be admired and appreciated. Mary grew up in Detroit where she raised herself in a difficult environment. She spent the years after high school in Tahoe CA as a park ranger, ski patroller and outdoor guide. Mary then left all of these things to pursue a career in Montana criminal law. It amazes me to watch my backpacking friend and mom of two kids also show up on TV's Dateline as a skilled prosecutor. Mary is truly "tough" in every sense of the word and this translates into everything she does. She passionately dedicates herself to both her professional and personal endeavors. She inspires me as I watch her teach her children the love of outdoors, spend quality time with her husband Matt and still find time to contribute to the Helena community. Mary seems to have endless ambition and energy to balance all of these things with grace and composure.

I need to also speak to Mary's involvement in the Helena and Montana community, particularly inspiring women. 6 years ago, Mary started inviting various acquaintances into the Mountains for a backpacking adventure. They were always women with little to no experience in the backcountry. In addition, she organized events at the Base Camp to help women equip themselves to handle these trips. I think she has led well over 50 women into the wilderness throughout Montana. This venture led to her Hiker Midnight identity and ultimately her job at Gaia GPS. She leads numerous backpacking trips for Andrew Skurka, who is one of the most important people in this business. I mention this because it shows not only her depth as a person, but her involvement in the community and inspiration to so many Helena women. I watched her speak for an hour at the annual "Women Leading Montana Conference" in Great Falls a few years ago. As the events keynote speaker, Mary's comical and energetic depiction of her life inspired a standing ovation. Her passion and enthusiasm are contagious as she inspires people to live a full life.



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Mary and her husband Matt both are active members of the Helena political community. I mention this as Mary has close friends throughout the community who are both Republicans and Democrats. Mary and Matt always attend local fundraisers such as Healthy Mother, Healthy Babies annual event, Harvest Moon for Prickly Pear, Wine Crush for Big Brothers and Big Sisters and many others. She is highly respected by Helena community members, business owners, co-workers and educators. I mention this as I have no doubt, she would be highly electable in future campaigns.

One of Mary's most important qualities is her thoughtfulness and level-headed demeanor. She has an unbelievable amount of patience and an ever-present calm temperament which constantly inspires those around her. I've watched her exhibit those qualities in her professional, friendships, business relationships and with her family. Helena needs to continue appointing judges that introspective, thoughtful and patient. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Chelsey George
President

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 12:02 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Kristi Ponozzo <ponozzo_21@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 12:45 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on First Judicial District Court Vacancy

Dear Commission:

I write to share my support of Mary Cochenour for First Judicial District Court Judge. Mary has been a friend, neighbor, and colleague for more than a decade.

Mary is thoughtful and measured in her approach to addressing issues and deliberative and balanced in her philosophies and world views. I'm always impressed with the energy and focus she has to work hard and remain passionate about life, work and the law.

She has firmly rooted experience with the judicial system and advocates for fair jurisprudence and an equitable judicial system.

Mary would bring a great depth and breadth of background and experience, with the strong ethical grounding needed for this important position.

Thank you,

Kristi Ponozzo, Helena Montana

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 12:02 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Thad Adkins <thad_adkins@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 12:12 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] First Judicial District Court Judicial Vacancy, Public Comment

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

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

I am writing to recommend Mary Cochenour for the Montana First Judicial District Court Judge position being vacated by the Honorable Judge Reynolds.

I first met Mary ten years ago while I was working as a public defender and she was a prosecutor with the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office. Although we frequently disagreed, sometimes vehemently, about varying issues, I was always struck by her intelligence, personability, and grasp of both the legal and factual issues at play.

We continued to appear opposite each other over the years in varied representational capacities, and she has only grown in her abilities as a litigator. I believe she has the right temperament to be fair, compassionate, and correctly apply the law, and the ability to effectively and efficiently manage a crushing docket load.

I strongly urge you to recommend her for selection for the judicial appointment, and thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

Thad Adkins
Helena, MT



1507 E Broadway | Helena, MT 59601 | lovelandk@gmail.com

September 4th, 2020

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission,

I am writing in support of the Mary Elizabeth Cochenour's application for district court judge for Montana's First Judicial District. I am a public health consultant based out of Helena and have worked extensively on substance use issues in Montana's justice system. I currently lead the Montana State Substance Use Disorder Taskforce for the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and recently completed a strategic plan for addressing substance use in Montana's justice system for the Montana Department of Corrections.

As a public health professional with expertise in how mental health and substance use disorders impact crime in our state, I believe Mary Cochenour is uniquely positioned to step into this role as an effective district court judge. Mary is a leader in our community, known for bringing a sense of fairness, but also empathy and understanding, to the work she does in every arena of her life. She is well respected for her tenure as a prosecutor with the Montana Department of Justice and is known by her colleagues statewide for her intelligence, dedication, and work ethic.

As our justice system faces a crisis of jail and prison overcrowding, ballooning child welfare rolls and overcrowded court dockets, driven by substance use and mental health concerns, we need judges like Mary who can bring fresh thinking and innovative solutions to bear to help our courts adequately address the underlying causes of crime while wisely and fairly apply the law to all individuals in our justice system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Katie Loveland'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Loveland MPH, MSW
Principal | Loveland Consulting



Girls Thrive
PO Box 1771
Helena, MT 59624
(406) 438-6066
blair@girlsthrive.com
www.girlsthrive.com

September 3, 2020

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

My name is Blair Haseman and I'm writing to you in support of Mary Cochenour for district court judge. I am the Director of the Helena-based, volunteer-operated nonprofit, Girls Thrive (GT). At GT, we are on a mission to inspire girls, in grades 6-12, to empower themselves through a variety of physical activities and educational lessons designed to promote self-confidence, self-esteem, and positive body image. We provide three sessions throughout the year and teach a wide variety of physical activities. Running and mountain biking are our core sports in the fall and spring, but we also offer training in: cross-country skiing, hiking, swimming, rock climbing, kayaking, Pilates, yoga, and strength training.

We were fortunate to cross paths with Mary a few years ago, when she reached out to provide a lesson to our girls on mountaineering and backpacking. We were immediately impressed with Mary's passion for inspiring girls and women to recreate in the great outdoors and have been partnering in our sessions ever since. Mary has gone out of her way to ensure the girls always have a dynamic, innovative, and inspirational learning experience. This fall, she is organizing and leading a map reading lesson for our girls on Mount Ascension. In previous years, she has organized an educational event for our girls at The Base Camp, complete with an elaborate store scavenger hunt. On another occasion, she invited our 25 girls and coaches over to her house to explain what and how she packs for her epic backpacking trips. She provided physical demonstrations with all of her gear and even let our girls test it out for themselves. Needless to say, we were inspired and impressed.

Fielding many questions and navigating educating 25 girls is tough and one has to be fair, organized, confident, patient, and compassionate. There are always a wide variety of questions and comments, which lead to many tangential topics. Mary was so wonderful about directly answering the girls' questions honestly and smoothly transitioning back to her lesson. She tactfully led us through her education with ease and was unruffled by the many unpredictable, chaotic moments, a trait that is surely well-suited to being district court judge. Mary is completely even-keeled and would make an excellent district court judge.

Working with Mary over the years has been a pleasure and we couldn't recommend her more. We encourage you to hire Mary Cochenour for the position of district court judge.

Sincerely,

Blair R Haseman

Blair Haseman, MS
Girls Thrive Executive Director

Patrick M. Risken
2870 Aspenway Dr.
Helena, Montana 59601

September 3, 2020

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

Re: **Mary Elizabeth Cochenour**
District Court Judge, First Judicial District

Dear Commission members:

I'm pleased to recommend Mary Cochenour to fill the unexpired term of Judge James Reynolds.

My father practiced law in Helena from the early 1950's through the '70's, providing me with plenty of exposure to lawyers and judges. My own legal career was primarily in Spokane, spending 30 years there in a litigation practice. Fortunately, an opportunity to return to Helena to work for the Montana Attorney General was presented in 2014. I met Mary when I came back home.

Through the years I've noticed that litigation lawyers aren't shy about claiming any number of jury trials and I've had my share. That's why I believe it is so important that a skilled, competent and compassionate person be appointed to fill any trial court vacancy.

It has long been my opinion that a judge must possess not only analytical skills and "judicial temperament" but also talent developed through the hard work of trial practice. It is critical that judges understand the case in the courtroom and what the lawyers had to accomplish to get it to trial: communication, cooperating through difficult issues, organization, diligence and finally presenting. The assigned judge can be a tremendous asset to trial lawyers when the judge "knows what they're looking at." With firm, fair guidance an effective judge can shepherd a case through

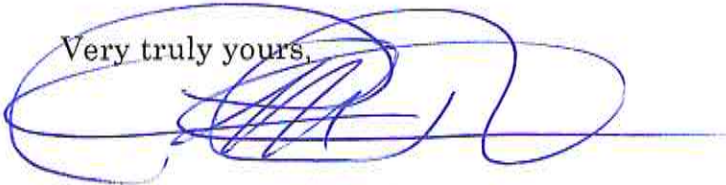
its stations while avoiding the inefficiencies that can bog down an entire judicial department. Keeping the lawyers and parties on track is essential. An experienced judge will keep the record clean and minimize the potential for error. Importantly, an effective judge will make timely decisions, even the most difficult. Cases move and justice is never delayed. The lawyers, parties and the court system all benefit. These attributes describe Mary, right down the line.

My office was next to Mary's for over five years. I observed Mary work tirelessly and compassionately with victims and witnesses who were under incredible stress. She listened intently, discussed thoroughly and never rushed a discussion. Mary's work with law enforcement professionals and other witnesses was concise but thorough, ensuring an efficient trial presentation. Mary handled extremely difficult and at times heartbreaking criminal cases with a firm hand, a caring attitude, keen attention to the evidence and a terrific work ethic. I watched Mary in trial and clearly recall her focus, organization and concise communication. I am comfortable stating that Mary is one of the best trial lawyers that I have ever seen. Having Mary right next door was an asset to me as well. She has a talent for distilling an issue to its core elements, which is so critical to successful trial practice. That talent transfers perfectly to running an efficient courtroom.

Mary knows and practices the craft better than the vast majority of lawyers that I know, with good humor and respect for everyone. Support staff loves her and there isn't a lawyer in this office that doesn't admire Mary, for her skills and as a terrific person, friend and mother. The First Judicial District Court would be very well served by Mary Cochenour's appointment to fill Judge Reynolds' remaining term.

Thank you for considering this recommendation. It was my honor to present.

Very truly yours,



PATRICK M. RISKEN
Montana Bar #11764
Washington State Bar #14632
Idaho Bar #8394 (inactive)

Letters to judicial nominating commission for Mary Cochenour and Christopher Abbott

Dear members of the Judicial Nominating Committee:

My name is Dorothy McCarter. I served as District Judge for the First Judicial District in Montana from 1989 until my retirement in 2013. I am familiar with the appointment process, since I went through it in 1989 when the Honorable Judge Henry Loble retired before the end of his term.

Mary Cochenour and Christopher Abbott have each asked me to write a letter to you to recommend them for the vacancy to occur upon the early resignation of the Honorable James Reynolds. Since I hold both Mary and Chris in high regard, I decided to recommend them both and leave the decisions to you. I understand that your committee will provide a list of candidates to the governor, and I urge you to include them both.

Mary and Chris began their legal careers in Helena, and appeared in my court almost daily for many years. They both served as public defenders and later moved on to other areas, including prosecution and civil law. They are both highly skilled attorneys in every area of the law that I observed in my court. I always enjoyed presiding on cases in which they were involved. Mary and Chris are both respectful of the court and the court proceedings. They were well prepared for every case. Their conduct has been impeccable, and their presence pleasant and efficient.

In my experience on the bench I appreciate the importance of the judge to be personable and respectful of attorneys and their clients at all times. Mary and Chris are very likable and get along with the judges and lawyers. Judicial temperament is paramount for a good judge. Mary and Chris have always maintained an even temper in all kinds of cases, including those contentious situations that could rile up anyone. They both have a good sense of humor that helps maintain a calm and pleasant courtroom environment.

Mary and Chris are both highly intelligent, are hard working and are excellent legal writers. Neither seems to be the type of person easily influenced by extrajudicial pressures.

For these reasons, I most enthusiastically recommend both Mary and Chris for the judicial position. Please contact me if I provide any further information.

Sincerely,
Dorothy McCarter

Melissa A. Schlichting
1030 Cedarwood Drive
Helena, MT 59601
Cell: (406) 475-2891
E-Mail: melischlichting@gmail.com

September 7, 2020

Dear Judicial Nomination Committee:

I am writing in support of Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Judgeship vacancy.

I have known Mary for the past seven years mostly as a colleague at the Montana Department of Justice, but also as an inspiring leader and friend. I believe her experience both inside and out of the courtroom means Mary will serve our community well as a Judge.

First, Mary is an enormously talented prosecutor that I was fortunate enough to watch during the *Campbell* homicide trial. Mary's opening was exceptional as she took command of the courtroom and everyone listened in rapt attention.

Second, Mary is an intrepid adventurer, inspiring and encouraging women to enjoy all the outdoors have to offer. Her backpacking trips are legendary. I love to join in the adventures vicariously. Mary's adventurous spirit demonstrates her determination to take on any challenge and conquer it.

Lastly, Mary is caring and compassionate and possesses the necessary temperament to be a great Judge. For all these reasons and more, I am honored to support Mary to the Judicial Nomination Committee. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Melissa Schlichting

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Tuesday, September 8, 2020 9:35 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Jenn Ewan <jenn@sovapartners.com>
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 3:43 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Recommendation for Mary Cochenour for a First Judicial District, District Court Judgeship

To Lois Menzies and the Judicial Nomination Commission,

I wholeheartedly support Mary Cochenour's application to serve as a Judge in the First Judicial District of Montana. I first met Mary in law school while I was a first year student and she was a third-year student. Mary ended up marrying one of my classmates (Matt Cochenour) and so I got to know her in school and at more personal functions outside of school. Mary is one of the hardest working human beings I know and brings strength, humility, humor, and sensitivity to everything she does. She shows up, every day, not only for her work within the legal realm, which has been almost exclusively in the public sector, but as a mother, guide, wife, and friend. She's a natural listener, which I believe to be a critical skill in a position such as she is seeking. She makes thoughtful, educated, and careful decisions because she understands the gravity of the lives before her and while I think her academic skills and career thus far would make her an excellent candidate, it's the life factors that I think set her apart. Mary's humble beginnings in Detroit, her work in the outdoors, the natural (and gifted) people skills that simply can't be taught, and her ability to be professionally compassionate; all with an eye towards justice would make Mary one of the most effective and beloved judges to have presided in Montana.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions and have a great weekend!

Regards,

Jenn Ewan
Partner
Sova, PLLC
224 N. Higgins Ave.
PO Box 8063
Missoula, MT 59807
jenn@sovapartners.com
sovapartners.com [\[t.sidekickopen05.com\]](http://t.sidekickopen05.com)
Phone: (406) 370-6755



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September 9, 2020

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

To Whom it May Concern:

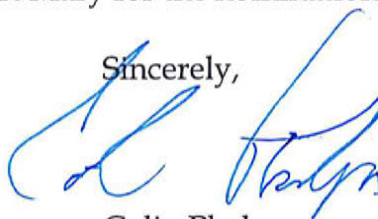
I am writing to recommend Mary Cochenour for appointment as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District Court.

I was born and raised in Helena and have practiced law here for five years. Two of those years were spent clerking for Justice Baker of the Montana Supreme Court and the other three have been spent in private practice with Christensen & Prezeau, PLLP. During my relatively short career, I have come to appreciate those attorneys and judges who approach the practice of law from a practical perspective and seek to use their position to advance the greater good.

I have known Mary personally and professionally for over five years. Mary exemplifies the qualities I most admire in attorneys and judges. Mary's role in forming the Treatment Court in the First Judicial District Court demonstrates her capacity for finding common sense solutions to pressing problems. Her pro bono work and involvement with organizations such as Girls Thrive and the Montana Outdoor Heritage Project demonstrates her passion for giving back to our community. These characteristics, in addition to her integrity and work ethic, would make for an excellent district court judge.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Mary for the nomination.

Sincerely,



Colin Phelps



STATE OF MONTANA BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLE

STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

ANNETTE CARTER, CHAIRMAN

OFFICE: (406) 846-1404

FAX: (406) 846-3512

hopp@mt.gov

1002 Hollenbeck Road

Deer Lodge, MT 59722

September 9, 2020

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

Re: Mary Cochenour, professional reference (Montana First Judicial District Court vacancy)

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am pleased to offer my support of Mary Cochenour's application for appointment to the vacant District Judge position in the Montana First Judicial District. (In the interest of candor, I am submitting letters of reference on behalf of two of the applicants.)

By way of introduction, I served as Silver Bow County's chief prosecuting attorney from 1987 through 2006 and as a district judge in Silver Bow County from January 2007 through July 2018. I served two terms in the Montana Legislature. I currently serve as a member of the Montana Board of Pardons and Parole. In short, my professional career has been devoted to the core principles of fair treatment to all citizens and equal access to justice. From my communications with Mary Cochenour, it is clear she shares those ideals.

My knowledge of and relationship with Mary Cochenour arose during the course of her appearances in my courtroom on behalf of the State of Montana and, more importantly, the victims of crime. In fact, Mary appeared as co-counsel in those proceedings with Daniel Guzynski (the other applicant for whom I submitted a recommendation). Mary has tried numerous felony cases to conclusion. Her trial experience has provided her with solid understanding of the rules of evidence and procedure governing criminal cases. With that foundation, Mary will easily adapt to presiding over the wide range of civil cases that fall within the jurisdiction of the district court.

Mary Cochenour is an effective legal researcher and writer. She also is a skilled oral communicator. Those abilities are essential to success on the district court bench. A judge's decisions have to be understood to be fully implemented and enforced.

I am confident that Mary will uphold the high ethical standards required of a district judge. As a prosecutor, Mary was a strong advocate for her clients. However, she still recognized and practiced her obligation of fairness to the opposing parties. That professional balance and commitment will serve Mary well on the bench.

Based on my contact and communication with trial judges, prosecuting attorneys, defense

attorneys, law enforcement authorities and victims, Mary is well respected. Such respect is the direct result of her competence, professionalism and integrity.

Of particular note is Mary's commitment to *pro bono* legal service, as demonstrated by her receipt of a First Judicial District Court award in 2018. Mary also is willing to address the ever-increasing issues presented by *pro se* litigants.

As a survivor of the district court bench, I am pleased that an attorney of Mary's experience and ability aspires to that position. Montana citizens, and particularly the residents of Lewis & Clark and Broadwater Counties, will be the beneficiaries of Mary Cochenour's appointment as a district judge.

Mary Cochenour has earned your strong consideration of her application for the vacant trial judge position.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about Mary Cochenour's qualifications and my recommendation.

Sincerely,

Brad Newman, Member
Montana Board of Pardons and Parole

September 10, 2020

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

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

I write to express my unequivocal support for Mary Cochenour to serve as a District Court Judge for Montana's First Judicial District. Mary is the ideal candidate for this position.

I first got to know Mary when we worked together as Public Defenders in Helena starting in 2006. Aside from feeling immediate affection for her friendly manner and disarming sense of humor, I was impressed with her approach to the job. It's no secret that the role of a Public Defender is a demanding and often thankless one. A successful Public Defender must be structured, quick on her feet, and capable of balancing compassion and realism. Mary excelled. And with grace. Her work ethic and personal integrity quickly earned the respect of our City, Justice, and District Court judges, her clients, and opposing counsels, as other letters of recommendation will undoubtedly attest. She was a valuable resource to me both personally and professionally throughout our tenures together, and we remain friends to this day.

When Mary later became a prosecutor I was pleased, both as a criminal defense attorney and a friend. I knew she would bring the same disciplined work ethic and balance of compassion and realism to the role of prosecutor that she possessed as a defense attorney. And indeed, she has. Prosecutorial discretion is of course one of the most important aspects of our criminal justice system, affording prosecutors a tremendous deal of power. I have always trusted this responsibility in Mary's hands and have always known her to be fair.

Mary's passion for her work is apparent. As impressive, she has mastered the elusive work-life balance without compromising on either. After she joined the Department of Justice as an Assistant Attorney General, it was not uncommon to hear a story of Mary prosecuting a complex case in the eastern part of the state during the week, and another of her and her family tearing up the slopes of Big Sky

that weekend. This ability to balance family with work lends itself to Mary's grace and her mental stamina—which will serve the bench well.

During my fifteen years of advocacy for the State of Montana, I have appeared before dozens of District Court judges. I have no doubt that Mary will bring esteem and integrity to the bench.

Sincerely,

Courtney Cosgrove

Courtney Cosgrove
Special Assistant Attorney General

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 9:12 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: kevin braun <kbraun78@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 5:22 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] To: Judicial Nomination Commission, c/o Lois Menzies, Office of the Court Administrator.

From: Kevin Braun
Re: Mary Cochenour Nomination

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am writing to voice my support for Mary Cochenour for district court judge in the First Judicial District Court. I have known Mary since she started working at the Attorney General's Office and have found her to possess the qualities that I believe one should have as a district court judge. Mary has a keen legal mind, is very diligent in her work and exceptionally hard working. In addition, my interaction with Mary showed that she was fair and reasonable in her approach to her cases. Mary is involved with her community and I believe she would serve us all in an exceptional way if she is selected as the new district court judge.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments, It is my sincere hope that you will choose to interview Mary and advance her name to the Governor for consideration in the appointment process.

Sincerely,

Kevin Braun
2660 Colt Drive
East Helena, MT 59635

HOYT & BLEWETT PLLC

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

ALEXANDER (ZANDER) BLEWETT, III
KURT M. JACKSON
JOSEPH P. COSGROVE
DREW BLEWETT
ANDERS BLEWETT
JOHN C. HOYT
1922-2001

September 9, 2020

501 SECOND AVENUE NORTH
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GREAT FALLS, MT 59403-2807
PHONE (406) 761-1960
FAX (406) 761-7186
h&b@hoytandblewett.com

Email: lmenzies@mt.gov
mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

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

Re: Mary Cochenour Letter of Support

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

My name is Anders Blewett, and I am a partner at the law firm of Hoyt & Blewett PLLC in Great Falls, Montana. I am writing to voice my support for the appointment of Mary Cochenour to the judicial vacancy in the 1st Judicial District.

I first met Mary in law school more than a decade ago and I worked with her husband Matt in the Yellowstone County Attorney's Office in the summer of 2006. Mary is as close to a self-made person as exists in the law. She has overcome tremendous obstacles and traveled a very unconventional path to get where she is in her legal career. Her resilience, independent spirit, strong intellect and worth ethic have helped her become a skilled trial lawyer.

In her advocacy for crime victims, she has unflinchingly taken on very difficult criminal cases and tried them to juries. Mary prosecuted the case of *State vs. Joseph Campbell*, while our firm handled the civil claims against Joseph Campbell. Throughout this case, Mary interacted with members of firm and conducted herself with highest level of professionalism in what was a very complex case. As a result of Mary's efforts, Mr. Campbell ultimately pled no contest to negligent homicide. Mary's extensive courtroom experience has prepared her to take on the rigors of serving as a judicial district. She has the endurance and experience necessary to handle the heavy work load and she has the confidence necessary to make difficult decisions.

I strongly recommend that the Judicial Nomination Commission appoint Mary Cochenour be the next State District Court Judge for the 1st Judicial District. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Anders Blewett

AB:jj

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Sunday, September 13, 2020 10:04:35 PM

From: Heidi R. Goettel <hgoettel@crowleyfleck.com>
Sent: Friday, September 11, 2020 7:01 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mary Cochenour

Judicial Nomination Commission:

This is to recommend Mary Cochenour for appointment as First Judicial District Judge. I have known Mary for 18 years. First, as a fellow law student at the University of Montana, then as a colleague in the First Judicial Bar and a parent in the Helena community. Most recently, I have known Mary as an inspirational speaker at women's leadership conferences and a leader of empowering women's wilderness trips.

Mary's legal experience and acumen speaks for itself for qualification for this position. I can speak to Mary's character. As a law student, a practicing attorney and a community leader, Mary has exemplified work ethic, integrity, professionalism and grit.

Mary is an inspiration and role model personally and professionally. Her character is well suited for the judiciary, especially to carry on the treatment court program from Judge Reynolds. Mary can inspire the best in people and instill confidence to overcome challenges. This was my experience when I participated in a challenging 26 mile back-packing trip that Mary led last summer.

Mary is a competent, confident leader. She is also deeply caring and compassionate. Mary is driven to better the community and the lives of individuals, especially women and girls. She gives of herself generously in service.

Finally, our judges have to work exceptionally hard to keep up with the volume of cases they hear and decide. It must be incredibly demanding and emotionally draining to have such responsibility. Mary has the most stamina and strength, physically and emotionally, of anyone I know. She has shown herself to have what it takes to excel in demanding positions and situations.

I hope you will select Mary for nomination. We would be very lucky to have Mary as one of our district court judges.

Thank you,
Heidi R. Goettel
164 Briarwood Lane
Helena, MT 59601
406-410-0602

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MICHAEL G. BLACK

Post Office Box 1311
Helena, Montana 59624-1311

Phone: (406) 546-0017 - Email: blacklaw@blackfoot.net

September 13, 2020

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

Re: First Judicial District Judgeship Vacancy (Broadwater and Lewis and Clark Counties)
Application of Mary E. Cochenour

To the Judicial Nomination Commission and Governor Steve Bullock:

The purpose of this letter is express support for appointment of Ms. Mary E. Cochenour to the position of District Court Judge for First Judicial District. I ask the members of the Judicial Nomination Commission to submit her name in nomination to Governor Bullock, and request that he appoint her to this important position.

I have been practicing law for over thirty years, and I have spent a significant amount of time litigating cases in Lewis and Clark County. I am acquainted with the bar here and am familiar with several of the applicants. I firmly believe, without qualification, that Ms. Cochenour should be appointed District Court Judge.

In my mind, a good judge has several important qualities. A good judge should be a serious student of legal principles, experienced in a variety of legal contexts, and demonstrate good instincts for application of the law in real life. A good judge also needs to work hard, both in time spent and intellectual effort. The judge who wrestles with issues is not arbitrary. A good judge should be fair and compassionate to all who appear before the judge. The judge who treats others with respect obtains respect in return. Finally, a good judge sometimes needs to squarely address controversial issues and act decisively to confirm that our system of justice is both fair and impartial.

My experience with Ms. Cochenour dates back to when she joined the Attorney General's office. Most of my practice has involved civil litigation, while most of her experience has been in criminal matters. In her duties with the Prosecution Services Bureau, I observed Mary diligently and astutely prepare her cases. When I had a question about an unfamiliar criminal

legal issue or a matter of criminal procedure, I would always approach Mary for help first – and if I had the opportunity to talk with Mary, there was no need to approach anyone else second. Because of her role in worker's compensation fraud matters, we often discussed the interplay between civil and criminal aspects of the worker's compensation statutory scheme. While Mary did not practice in the Civil Division, I was consistently impressed with her grasp on the nuances of civil litigation. Mary demonstrates the rare combination of sharp intellect, true humility, and finesse under fire. I have admired her ability to treat others with dignity and respect in difficult situations, so I know she has the calm temperament expected of a judge. Finally, Mary does not shy away from hard decisions and is committed to doing what's fair.

In her career, Mary has demonstrated superior legal ability, exhibited an exceptional work ethic, and earned the respect of the legal community. Mary Cochenour has all the qualities we should expect in an outstanding judge.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael G. Black', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael G. Black

MGB/gm

September 13, 2020

Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

This letter is in regard to Mary Cochenour's application to be considered for the Montana District Court Judgeship, First District.

My name is Mary Hollow. I was born and raised in Montana and for the past 20 years, I have worked in conservation and outdoor recreation. I've served in leadership capacities, currently as the Executive Director of Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT) and previously as Government Affairs Director for The Nature Conservancy of Montana. I have known Mary for 7 years, and have worked and spent time with her in both personal and professional capacities.

Mary and her family have been land trust members for years. The land trust leads on private land conservation, trails and recreation projects, and community conservation work in Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Broadwater, and Powell counties. PPLT maintains 90 miles of trails near Helena, acquires key open space, and engages communities broadly. Conservation actions by public and private sector entities frame an important future for Montana's wild places as well as the outdoor economy that depends on them, a topic that Mary understands deeply.

On a more personal level, I have also known Mary as a friend. She has a highly sophisticated ability to communicate successfully on a variety of platforms. Mary handles intense situations with grace, facts, and honesty. She is highly organized, has endless energy and shows a regular commitment to community and to service. Mary is a joyful human with a very broad and deep network of support in this region, one that spans all spectrums of diversity.

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you for your role in appointing our next representative to the District Court.

I am available for further comment or discussion if it would be helpful.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Hollow".

Mary Hollow
marytuckerman@gmail.com
406-240-4907

melissa lewis

and associates

September 14, 2020

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am writing in strong support of Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District judge position that is being vacated by Judge Reynolds.

I have known Mary for more than twelve years and have always been impressed with the skills that Mary possesses—skills that have made her an excellent attorney and that would make her an excellent judge in our community.

Not only does Mary have a keen legal mind, but she has an incredible work ethic, and a strong moral compass. She is exactly the type of person anyone should want in a judge: smart, fair, calm, and someone who will listen to both sides and make a timely decision based on the facts and the law.

I am the owner of a local Helena government relations and consulting firm and have spent more than a decade working with legislators and regulators at both the state and federal level. In that time, I have had the opportunity to work with many outstanding lawyers, and I would rank Mary among the best.

Mary brings much more to the table than her considerable skill as an attorney. As her application shows, Mary is committed to serving the people of the Helena community. From her efforts serving low income residents as a pro bono attorney to her time spent volunteering to empower Helena women and teenage girls, Mary has a proven track record of public service in this community. She is invested in this community, and we would be well-served to have Mary as a judge.

Thank you for this opportunity to publicly support Mary. I strongly encourage the Commission to forward Mary's name to Governor Bullock.

Sincerely,



Melissa Lewis

Melissa Lewis & Associates, LLC

1127 5th Avenue

Helena, MT 59601

406-465-8045

September 16, 2020

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am pleased to recommend Mary Cochenour for the position of First Judicial District Court judge to fill the vacant position created by Judge Reynolds's retirement.

My name is John Lewis. I am a 4th generation Montanan with deep roots in serving the Montana public. For 12 years, I worked for Senator Max Baucus in Washington DC and later as his state director and I was a candidate for Montana's U.S. House seat in 2014. Currently, I am the Director of the Montana Department of Administration.

I have known Mary for over a decade. Over those years, Mary has been a prominent attorney and community member in Helena. You can always find her at fundraising events for local nonprofit organizations, at the soccer fields or basketball courts cheering her kids on from the sidelines or hiking on the local trails.

Mary has prosecuted some of the most heinous crimes in our district, including complex murder and rape cases. At the Attorney General's Office, she's had to take on the difficult task of prosecuting some of the state's elected and law enforcement officials, including sheriffs and police officers who were accused of wrongdoing and violating the public's trust. Mary is strong and confident in her decision making and has never had trouble making difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions based on her knowledge of the law.

Because of her experiences in life and career and her personality to naturally lead, I strongly recommend her for the position of district court judge. I know that Mary is dedicated to serving the people of Montana. She has demonstrated a commitment to Montana and particularly to the Helena community through her work as a public defender, prosecutor, pro bono attorney, and a volunteer and supporter of many nonprofit organizations. I personally know Mary to be honest, fair, hard-working, patient, smart, pragmatic, and to have strong loyalty to the law.

Mary possesses all the qualities to serve this community as a fair and impartial judge. She is a proven and committed public servant with the character, reputation, intelligence, and knowledge of the law that will make her an outstanding addition to the First Judicial District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Lewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Lewis

September 16, 2020

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

Re: Mary Cochenour Letter of Support

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

My name is Drew Blewett, and I am a partner at the law firm of Hoyt and Blewett PLLC in Great Falls, MT. I am writing this letter in support of Mary Cochenour respectfully requesting that the Judicial Nomination Commission strongly consider her for Montana State District Court Judge in Lewis and Clark County. I first met Mary while we were in law school together at the University of Montana and have always found her to be a person of sound character and great integrity. Throughout the course of Mary's fifteen year legal career, she has gained invaluable experience working as a law clerk with the Montana Supreme Court, an assistant public defender, a deputy county attorney, and an assistant attorney general. This broad spectrum of legal experience has provided her with a unique perspective that lends itself well to serving as a State District Court Judge where she would be responsible for making important and sometimes life-altering decisions for people in Lewis and Clark County.

Over the course of the last fifteen years, Mary has tried eighteen jury trials, most of which were complex criminal cases involving homicide or sexual assault charges. Few attorneys around the State can say the same. Needless to say, her track record confirms that she is more than prepared to take on the challenges inherent in serving as a State District Court Judge.

For these reasons, I wholeheartedly endorse Mary Cochenour for State District Court Judge in Lewis and Clark County and hope that the Judicial Nomination Commission takes into careful consideration her fifteen years of legal experience in making its decision.

Sincerely,

Drew Blewett
Attorney
Hoyt and Blewett PLLC

Kirsten K. Madsen

703 Eighth Ave. • Helena, Montana 59601
MadsenKirsten@aol.com • 406.459.8685

September 16, 2020

The Montana Judicial Nomination Commission
c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
mtsupremecourt@mt.gov
lmenzies@mt.gov

Re: Mary Cochenour Letter of Support

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

It is my pleasure to offer this letter of support for Mary Cochenour's application to fill the judgeship vacancy in the First Judicial District.

I am currently an Assistant Attorney General for the Montana Department of Justice, Agency Legal Services Bureau. For the first half of my career, I was honored to clerk for now-retired Judge John C. McKeon, Seventeenth Judicial District, and later for Honorable James P. Reynolds, First Judicial District when he first took the bench.

Many supporters will doubtlessly be able to tell you about Ms. Cochenour's traditional legal skills and courtroom aptitude. I, too, first met Mary in court, but in a different way. I was clerking for Judge Reynolds and he was working hard to get Lewis & Clark County's first drug treatment court up and running.

I was intrigued by Mary's participation as the prosecutor on the team. Her reputation with the county attorney's office was fair and respected, but tough; and I had observed her trial skills to be exceptional and on point. The treatment court format was entirely different and in many ways foreign to most adversarial criminal proceedings. Mary was genuinely interested in deepening her knowledge of trauma, addiction, and treatment and how the law could be applied differently in appropriate circumstances. She brought compassion for program participants, while maintaining firm, realistic goals; but most of all—she rooted for success with total enthusiasm and I saw what an enormously positive impact that had on participants. I watched how the relationships she built changed lives; even when a participant did not ultimately graduate.

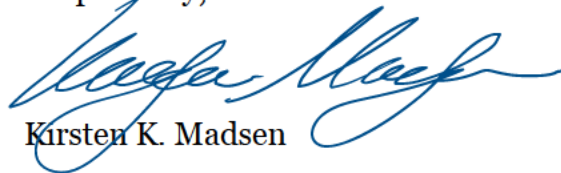
People were (and no doubt *are*) drawn to Mary because of the high expectations she sets, the cheerleading she provides to reach them, and the compassion she shows when stumbles arise. I observed up close Mary's desire for our community to be a better place to live and her recognition that, for some, the criminal justice system needs to work differently to produce the best outcome. I admire her outlook in this regard, her

willingness to learn a new way, and I am confident the good work of the treatment courts Judge Reynolds started would be continued in her capable hands.

In nearly a decade since meeting Mary, I have come to call her not just a colleague but a friend. Perhaps not unlike a participant in treatment court, I experienced first-hand what a marvel it is to take on a challenge *with* Mary—for me it was tackling my first backpacking trip, one that I was arguably in over my head on. Mary set that high expectation, that even as an utter novice two months before our trip, I would climb incredible mountains, over long distances, several days in a row, and live to tell about it. I stumbled and struggled plenty along the way, but Mary cheered me all the way up those mountains to success; I will forever marvel at the joy *she* took in seeing *me* reach nearly 10,000 feet. She has done this for dozens of women in our community, for years now through her Hiker Midnight endeavors—bring together women of diverse experiences, abilities, interests, and lives to challenge us, cheer with and for us, and create a healthier, closer, thriving, growing group of empowered women in the process.

This kind of natural leadership, consistency in how you treat people (whether friend or stranger), the ability to work impossibly hard, and general good cheer and belief in what is good about the world—they are not universal traits, but they are what is needed to tackle the toughest days in our district courts. Ms. Cochenour has them all, and she should be among your recommendations to fill the judgeship in the First Judicial District.

Respectfully,



Kirsten K. Madsen

Pam W. Hunthausen
5 Rebecca Court
Helena, MT 59601

September 16, 2020

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

Dear Commission Members:

Re: First Judicial District Court Judge Candidate Mary Elizabeth Cochenour

I write today to express my wholehearted support of Mary E. Cochenour's application for selection to fill the seat of outgoing District Court Judge James Reynolds of the First Judicial District Court. The Commission has, in my opinion, two outstanding applicants and Mary Cochenour is one of them.

Mary and I worked together at the Montana Supreme Court. Mary worked as a Law Clerk for the Hon. Brian Morris, and I worked in various support staff capacities, ending my 30-year career as the Judicial Assistant to Chief Justice Mike McGrath. Over my years at the Supreme Court, I was able to observe numerous Law Clerks' work, personality, demeanor, intelligence and manner—among other things. Mary's work was well reasoned, well written and professional. She stood out among the many. Personally, Mary was a joy to be around and she worked extremely well with her coworkers.

I have visited with Mary since she and I left the Court and I have been impressed with her many personal rolls away from the law including: wife, mother, backcountry guide, and all-around health enthusiast. Between her legal experience and life experience, Mary is the ideal candidate for District Court Judge for the First Judicial District.

Furthermore, with women comprising over 50 percent of the population, the First Judicial District Court would be well served to have a second female judge. Mary would bring much-needed balance to the First Judicial District. But, trust me, I am not writing this letter in favor of Mary's selection solely because she is a woman; I am writing this because she is *qualified* both in the law and in life.

I encourage your favorable consideration of Mary E. Cochenour's application for District Court Judge. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Pam W. Hunthausen

George P. "Chris" Christensen
182 Sand Piper Loop
Helena, MT 59602
406-431-3802
christensyn@gmail.com

September 15, 2020

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

Commission Members:

I am writing you today to urge you to appoint Mary Cochenour to the Judicial seat being vacated by Judge Reynolds.

Mary will bring a wealth of experience to the bench. She has served both at the county and state level focusing on criminal law. As the Assistant Attorney General she prosecuted some of the most heinous and complex criminal trials. Her well-versed background in both law and civic involvement give her an excellent perspective to bring to the bench. As a district judge serving in Helena she would be called to hear cases involve state statutes as well representing the courts in the Montana Legislature. She has the experience to handle these matters.

Mary has the temperament to be judge; the personal attributes of a good listener, teacher, scholar and decision maker.

Luck is defined as preparedness meeting opportunity. The Commission is very lucky to have the opportunity to recommend Mary for this most important judicial seat.

Sincerely, 

George P. "Chris" Christensen
Retired State Bureau Chief
Community Volunteer

Karen S. Townsend
1450 Pattee Canyon Rd.
Missoula, MT 59803

September 14, 2020

To the Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission
% Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
P.O. Box 203005
Helena, MT 59620-3005

I write in support of the application of Mary Cochenour for the Judicial vacancy for the First Judicial District. I have known Mary since her law school days when I had the good fortune to serve as one of her coaches on the Trial Competition Team. Together with Professor Cynthia Ford, I watched Mary show the skills as a student that ultimately allowed her to develop into a talented trial lawyer. She demonstrated a number of qualities even then that will serve her well as a District Court Judge. She was extremely hard working, easily grasped the intricacies and complexities of the cases she was assigned to, worked well with her teammates and her coaches, and performed well under the stress of the competition.

I also had the opportunity to observe Mary when she served as a Legal Intern for the Missoula County Attorney's Office when I was the Chief Criminal Deputy. She again demonstrated her skills as she handled misdemeanor prosecutions before our Justice Courts during her senior year of law school managing to balance her school work, her responsibilities to the Trial Team and her work for the office with skill and grace.

Mary has also had exposure to the judiciary with her experience of serving as a law clerk. First to a busy trial court judge in Nevada, and then to then Associate Justice Brian Morris of the Montana Supreme Court. This experience had brought her into contact with the wide variety of cases that come before a Montana District Court Judge.

Mary had success as a prosecutor, first with the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office and later with the Montana Attorney General's Office where she served as a special prosecutor handling and trying cases throughout the state. I saw her in one case in Missoula before my retirement from the bench. She demonstrated the professionalism I expect of those who appear before me. Mary's expertise as a prosecutor has been recognized by her peers as she has taught other prosecutors on topics central to criminal law.

Mary was recognized for her excellence as a prosecutor having been awarded the Montana Department of Justice Award for Exemplary Work on Behalf of the People of Montana in 2015, and as Prosecutor of the Year in 2018. Not all prosecutors earn the kind of respect that her opponents have given her as is demonstrated by the letters of

support the Commission has received that have come from criminal defense attorneys who have had cases against her.

Mary has found time to also do significant pro-bono work as evidenced by her 2018 Pro Bono Publico Award given by the First Judicial District Bar Association.

Having had the very great pleasure to serve as a District Court Judge in Montana, I cannot agree more with Mary's description of a "good judge". The traits she describes: even temper, impartiality, humility, fairness, empathy, open-mindedness, decisiveness, confidence, effective communication skills, a natural curiosity for learning, an insatiable quest for truth and justice, and the ability to interpret and apply legal principles to a given set of factual circumstances, are traits that I believe she possesses.

I am convinced that the people of the First Judicial District would be well served by having Mary succeed the Honorable James Reynolds as the next District Court Judge. I truly hope that the Commission will forward her name to the Governor for consideration and hope that Governor Bullock will choose Mary for this important position.

I would be happy to discuss my opinions with any members of the Commission if that would be of help to any of you.

Sincerely,



Karen S. Townsend,
District Court Judge, (Ret.)

September 17, 2020

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

Re: First Judicial District Court – Mary Cochenour

Dear Members of the Commission,

I write in wholehearted support of Mary Cochenour's application to fill the vacancy left by Judge Reynolds in the First Judicial District. I urge you to endorse Ms. Cochenour to Governor Bullock for appointment to the bench. She's one of a kind. The opportunity to have her join Montana's judiciary should not be missed.

Mary has been among my dearest friends and most trusted colleagues since law school. She rocked my babies while I took my exams, played in the park with my toddler while I argued my first motions under the student practice act, sat on my couch hours after my second daughter was born on the first day of our last semester, and cried tears of joy with me when I passed the bar. While clerking for Justices Morris and Cotter we edited each other's draft opinions and shared the analytical lessons our respective mentors generously shared with us during our time in chambers.

More recently, Mary and I have taken to the mountains together. On our feet in the high country we restore our capacity to keep up with the rigors of raising families while practicing law and remaining committed to continual contributions to our community. We've supported each other through our terms of service on non-profit boards, coaching our kids' teams, hosting fundraisers, and contributing time and professional skills to organizations that improve our neighbors' lives in a town we both love for its quality of life and generous citizens.

In her legal work, as in the mountains, Mary is impeccably prepared. She never shies from hard decisions. She actively seeks the counsel of trusted mentors, considers their input, and then makes informed decisions that reflect her own judgment, the depth of her training, and the breadth of her experience. She listens first, and then decisively takes action. She is flexible in her thinking and problem-solving strategies ~ no small feat for someone whose penchant for planning against all foreseeable contingencies is second to no one else I've encountered.

I sat second chair with Mary for *voir dire* and jury selection during a weeklong trial. She successfully prosecuted a purportedly disabled worker's compensation claimant for stealing six figures worth of benefits from the State Fund after he had recovered from his injuries. Mary's case relied on the unsavory position that a blue-collar construction worker should repay the state for benefits he should never have received that it continued to pay. Her client was unsympathetic. The questions

GRADEN HAHN

of law were dry, confusing, and convoluted. And Mary's courtroom skills and ability to make the justice system relevant to the lives of everyday people were on full display.

Mary efficiently and effectively broke down the facts in the case to make the dispositive legal issues relatable and relevant to every person she talked to in the jury pool. She helped every potential juror (with two glaring grumpy exceptions) understand the importance of their participation in the courtroom as citizens of a functional democracy. She reached people with humor and compassion for the fact that they were more worried about managing absences from work and family than deciding whether State Fund recovered its losses. Mary's unmistakable commitment to the principles of justice and public service – in a case that required advocating for a boring and unpopular position – shone. Her jury engaged, did their job, and decided in her favor based on the undeniable evidence she presented and proper application of the law she helped them understand.

The catalogue of Mary's personal and professional successes reflected in her resume and letters of support speak for themselves. Mary can be as hard-nosed about seeking justice for victims of violence and abuse as she can be compassionately supportive of drug addicts striving for rehabilitation through the treatment court she helped establish. Her life path has exposed her to real-life hurdles which help her understand how people find themselves in court subjected to a judge's decision making. As a lawyer, she has applied her introspective nature, humility, and unending work ethic to help resolve innumerable cases to just outcomes. I have every confidence that anyone appearing in Mary's courtroom will be treated with the same dignity, respect, and fairness with which she has treated me for nearly two decades.

Mary has walked with me, literally and figuratively, through the most challenging and rewarding steps of my life. I am deeply grateful for her friendship. As her colleague in the law I have an up close and personal perspective on the qualities that will make her an outstanding judge. She has earned the respect of a broad spectrum of representative voices in our community as reflected in the endorsement letters supporting her candidacy. I am honored to add mine to the pile.

Sincerely,



Graden Hahn

Managing Attorney – Department of Labor Business Standards Division
Special Assistant Attorney General

From: [MT Supreme Court,](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Friday, September 18, 2020 10:50:32 AM

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

Before you is the difficult decision as to who will fill the shoes of Judge Jim Reynolds. To make such a decision is a daunting task. The good part is that you are presented with an excellent field of candidates.

I write this letter in support of Mary Cochenour's application to be the next District Judge in the First Judicial District. When I was a Judge here in Helena (1989-2015), Mary appeared in front of me countless times as a public defender, deputy county attorney, and deputy attorney general. In my many years as a Judge, hundreds of attorneys appeared in front of me in all sorts of proceedings. In terms of calm temperament, courtroom skill, ethics, thoughtfulness, and knowledge, Mary was always near the top of the list.

I have often described Mary as a dynamo, both professionally and personally. A brief review of her application shows a most interesting life story. Not only does she possess the legal skills to be a good judge, her personal history informs us that she can confidently and competently confront any task or challenge, no matter how daunting.

As you will be able to see from the many letters headed your way, Mary enjoys significant support for her application. She is a devoted parent, attorney and outdoors woman. She is very active and well regarded in the community. Her sense of community service is evidenced by her volunteering for several pro bono cases. As you are aware, these cases carry little reward, either financially or otherwise. With her compassionate views, however, Mary plows ahead and offers her services to help people through the Great Dismal Swamp of domestic relations cases.

In sum, I offer my wholehearted recommendation that you pass Mary's name on to our excellent Governor for appointment as District Judge of Montana's First Judicial District.

Thanks again for all that you do.

Best Regards,

Jeffrey Sherlock

Sent from my iPad

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 4:29 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Freyja Bell <freyjabelrealty@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 2:45 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Judicial Nomination- Letter of Recommendation

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

To Whom It May Concern,

I offer my support for Mary Cochenour to be the next First Judicial District Court Judge. I believe she has the integrity, skills, and experience to do an outstanding job for the citizens of Montana.

I had the pleasure of working with Ms Cochenour in 2011 in our respective roles on the First Judicial District Treatment Court which was overseen, then and now, by Judge James Reynolds. I was hired as Treatment Court Coordinator shortly after the commencement of the program and Mary was the representative from the County Attorney's office at the time. The treatment court program is a court supervised program for non-violent or sexual offenders who suffer from drug and alcohol addiction and is designed to keep these individuals in the community, working, and in group and individual counseling.

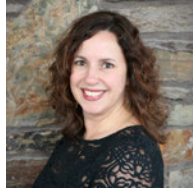
In her work on the treatment court, Mary displayed many qualities and skill sets that she would utilize as a Judge. I saw firsthand her ability to be fair and reasonable when discussing a participant's behavior and subsequent consequences with the other members of the team. Having 7 members on the team there were often two, or seven, contrasting opinions and the need to work together was paramount in the success of the program. Being fair and unbiased will serve her well as a judge.

Lastly, I just want to acknowledge Mary's love of Helena and Montana; she truly treasures this wonderful place we call home. Most likely she can be found outdoors with her family enjoying the wonderful activities that make Montana so special, whether it's on a pair of skis, a bike, or just her boots hitting the trail. I know Mary loves this state and wants the very best for it and therefore will serve all of the First Judicial District with the utmost skill and thoughtfulness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Freyja Bell

Freyja Bell



Real Estate Professional, GRI

freyja@uncommongroundmt.com | [406-461-8588](tel:406-461-8588)

Your Montana Real Estate Concierge



www.uncommongroundmt.com [uncommongroundmt.com]

Patricia Cotter
993 LeGrande Cannon Blvd.
Helena, MT 59601

September 20, 2020

Judicial Nomination Committee c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
Helena, MT

RE: Mary Cochenour application – First Judicial District Court judge

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission,

I write in support of the application of Mary Cochenour for the position of district judge for the First Judicial District.

I have known Mary since she began clerking for Justice Brian Morris in 2006. At the time, I was a justice on the Montana Supreme Court. The justices interacted frequently with the clerks for other justices, dropping in to discuss proposed opinions the clerks were writing. I remember Mary as an engaging yet serious young woman whose proposed opinions were comprehensive and very well-written. I was then able to follow her career until the end of my term in December 2016 while she worked for the Office of the Attorney General, as the court had frequent occasion to review the transcripts of many cases tried by Mary in the district courts to conviction. Her thorough and systematic trial work nearly always resulted in an affirmance on appeal.

Mary's application for appointment obviously reflects a broad and accomplished career. Three qualities stand out to me. First is the valuable perspective she gained by both defending and prosecuting persons accused of crimes; second is her commitment to pro bono work; and third is her dedication to the Treatment Court she helped bring to life. The Treatment Court is time-consuming and difficult; it is a tribute to Mary's belief in redemption and rehabilitation that she wants to continue that court's important work while fulfilling her other duties.

Mary's life and courtroom experiences have given her a first-hand appreciation of the difficulties litigants face and the importance of careful trial work and allowing all parties to be heard. Mary Cochenour has the experience, the philosophy, and the commitment to public service the job of district court judge requires. I therefore fully endorse her application and ask that you do so as well by forwarding her name to the governor for his consideration.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Cotter

September 21, 2020

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

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for Mary Cochenour to serve as district court judge in the First Judicial District Court.

I began learning what makes a fair, compassionate, and effective judge at the University of Montana School of Law, during which I worked as a paid intern for Judge Donald Molloy, who at that time was chief judge for the U.S. District Court of Montana. I moved to Helena after law school to clerk for the Montana Supreme Court: one year for Justice John Warner and one year with Justice Mike Wheat. Since then, I have been a civil litigator for ten years and have practiced before a number of federal and state district court judges and hearing officers, developing my understanding of desirable qualities in a judge. And while my support of Mary is completely independent and not on behalf of the State Bar of Montana, my involvement in the leadership of the State Bar has provided me the opportunity to interact with the judiciary in a less formal capacity, teaching me how the intangible qualities of a judge can contribute to their effectiveness in the courtroom.

While Mary and my paths have not crossed in the professional realm—my focus is on civil law and Mary's focus is on criminal law—I know of Mary's reputation as a well-respected and fair prosecutor. I had the opportunity to watch Mary in trial through the live streaming of *State v. Campbell* and was impressed with her calm yet passionate prosecution in such a high-profile case. I also have known Mary for a number of years through community activities and know her to be dedicated to family and public service.

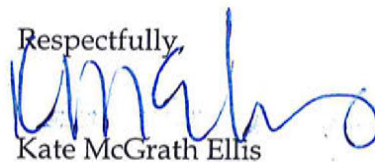
It is clear from what I know about Mary and her application materials that she holds the qualities of an outstanding judge. Mary has vast legal and trial experience—prosecuting 18 complex felony trials in 10 years—which will be valuable in both criminal and civil cases because it requires a deep understanding of court rules and the rules of evidence. Mary also

helped start the Treatment Court and knows what it takes to fulfill that role in helping solve the problems underlying crime in our community. Mary's commitment to access to justice issues is evident by her 2018 First Judicial District Pro Bono Award for helping a domestic violence survivor obtain a life-changing divorce.

What crystalizes my support for Mary is not only her impressive legal experience, but also her personal background, which demonstrates a dedication to achieving goals and hard work, both important qualities in a judge. It also shows that Mary will understand the challenges many in our community face, which is commensurate with the essential judicial qualities of compassion and fairness. The First Judicial District will also be served well by Mary's multi-dimensional employment history which demonstrates leadership and the ability to look at issues from different perspectives.

For these reasons, I support Mary Cochenour to serve as district court judge in the First Judicial District and encourage the Commission to recommend her to Governor Bullock. Thank you for the opportunity to support Mary.

Respectfully,



Kate McGrath Ellis

September 16, 2020

Montana Judicial Nomination Commission
c/o Lois Menzies
Office of Court Administrator
PO Box 203005
Helena, MT 59620
Via email: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

Re: Letter of Support for Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Court Judge Vacancy

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am pleased to support Mary Cochenour's application for appointment to the vacant District Court Judge position in the First Judicial District.

I have had the privilege to work with Mary in several of my positions within Montana's Criminal Justice System. I served as a Montana State Probation and Parole Officer and Supervisor from 1999 until 2016. I then served as the Department of Corrections Reentry Program Manager for just under a year when I was appointed to my current position as a member of the Montana Board of Pardons and Parole. I was promoted to the position of chair in June 2018.

My relationship with Mary began in 2007 when she was hired as a public defender and then a deputy county attorney for Lewis & Clark County. In 2011, we worked together on the creation of the First Judicial District Treatment Court. Mary and I continued to cross paths in my current position, when she participated in several parole board hearings, where she advocated for victims of sexual crimes.

In my opinion, Mary Cochenour exhibits the core principles necessary to be an effective judge. I have found Mary to be hard working, a fierce advocate for those she represents, a big picture thinker and a person one can trust.

I have seen firsthand Mary's advocacy for her clients. In her work as a prosecutor, especially in the role of prosecutor in the First Judicial District Treatment Court, she balanced community safety, treatment needs of the participants, and accountability. Her collaboration with the team brought about the success of this program which ultimately led to productive citizens, healthy parents and greater community safety.

Mary is skilled in communications. I have been present in both district court proceeding as well as parole board hearings and have seen firsthand Mary's ability to communicate information which represents her client's interests. She is thorough in what she communicates and always prepared.

Mary's various roles, in the criminal justice system, have prepared her well for the position of district court judge. Mary passions show that her community is always at the heart of what she does, whether it is has been through her professional endeavors or her public involvement. I believe Mary will bring honor and integrity to this position. For these reasons, I urge you to strongly consider her application.

Sincerely,

Annette Carter

THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

JIM RICE
JUSTICE

TELEPHONE (406) 444-5573
FAX (406) 444-3274
September 18, 2020



JUSTICE BUILDING
215 NORTH SANDERS
P.O. BOX 203001
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-3001

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

Re: Reference letter for applicant Mary Cochenour

Dear Commission Members:

I am honored to offer this letter of support for Mary Cochenour, an applicant for appointment as district judge in the First Judicial District.

Mary began her legal career by clerking at the Supreme Court for then-Justice Brian Morris. She did excellent work, providing insightful analyses and well-written opinion drafts. Since her term at the Court, Mary has been heavily engaged in litigation and trial work before the district courts, first as a public defender, then as a deputy county attorney, and followed by her service in the Department of Justice. She has tried numerous complex and difficult cases across the state, and her conscientious efforts were affirmed in many cases brought before the Supreme Court. After years of public service, Mary is now in the private sector, adding valuable commercial perspective to her impressive resume.

A couple years ago, I was privileged to present the First Judicial District Pro Bono Award to Mary, who, along with her husband, Matthew, provided legal representation to a domestic abuse survivor who had suffered a debilitating injury, helping her through a dissolution to start a new life. Pro bono work is not easily accommodated while in a busy government practice, but the award illustrated Mary's commitment to access to justice for all. Mary's career is marked by quality work in service to others, and there is no question she would make a fine district court judge.

Thank you for your consideration of Mary's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jim Rice". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "J" and a cursive "Rice".

Jim Rice
Justice
JAR:gg

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Conhenour
Date: Monday, September 21, 2020 10:12:56 PM

From: Kelly Brown <kellybrownmt@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 4:03 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mary Cochenour

I am writing this letter in support of Mary Cochenour for 1st Judicial District Court Judge.

My name is Kelly Brown. I am a Helena native and I've lived my entire life in Helena, MT. I worked at the Lewis & Clark County Justice Court for 17 years and had the pleasure of working with many attorneys, but one of the most memorable was Mary Cochenour.

During her time working as a prosecutor for the Justice Court, I observed Mary to be fair and kind, always willing to talk to someone in need, no matter the circumstances. She was always honest, reliable, and willing to work the long hours needed in her position as a prosecutor. The Justice Court is known for running through 30 or more cases a day. I experienced that Mary had the ability to multitask and work well under pressure; taking the time and care on each case to make sure it was handled correctly. While maintaining her caseload, she also provided after hours classes in our courtroom for minors found guilty, in Justice Court, of possession.

I believe Mary Cochenour's section as 1st Judicial District Court Judge would be the best decision for Lewis and Clark and Broadwater counties.

Thank you for your time.

Kelly Anne Brown
Helena, MT

September 21, 2020

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

Members of the Commission:

I write to strongly encourage you to consider Mary Cochenour for appointment as Judge of the First Judicial District Court. I've been employed with the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office for nearly six years, with a heavy caseload mainly comprised of felony domestic violence and DUI cases. In the time I've been in this position, the First Judicial District Court has seen a consistent rise in all types of filings and the judges of this district face a demanding workload with crowded dockets. Judge Reynolds' retirement not only leaves an overwhelming caseload of civil and criminal matters, but also leaves huge shoes to fill for the future of Treatment Court and the many participants who can benefit from it. Mary has been an exemplary trial attorney and I believe she would be an excellent candidate to fill this very demanding role.

When I first interned at the county attorney's office in 2012, Mary had just left for her position as an Assistant Attorney General. By then she already held a well-deserved reputation as a hardworking, tenacious, and conscientious attorney. Stories of Mary's dedication and fortitude as a prosecutor abounded in the office and I aspired to follow her lead. Her passion for the law and commitment to justice has been obvious throughout her career and would no doubt be exemplified with her on the bench.

In addition to her impressive career as an attorney, all of which has been dedicated to public service, Mary also demonstrated her commitment to this community through her involvement and outreach with local organizations. She cares about the people in this community and will carry that dedication on as a judge. Her experience in life as well as her career has given her a background perfectly suited to step into the role of judge, where she would no doubt continue to demonstrate compassion, integrity, and diligence.

Mary was a founding member of the First Judicial Treatment Court and would be uniquely suited to taking over Judge Reynolds' position, stepping into the void he will leave for all the participants. Treatment Court is a very different, but extremely important, model where the normal adversarial design of practice gives way to a team-based approach focused on supporting participants through trauma and addiction. Whomever is appointed will need to balance a heavy caseload of traditional matters with the collaborative and demanding role of Treatment Court judge. Mary would undoubtedly excel in both capacities.

I believe the citizens of this district deserve to have Mary as their next judge, and strongly encourage you to consider her for this important position.

Sincerely,

Fallon Stanton
Deputy County Attorney
Lewis and Clark County

Sept. 22, 2020

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

Dear Commissioners:

I write this letter in support of Mary Cochenour's application for appointment as a District Judge for the First Judicial District of the State of Montana.

I have known Mary since 2006 when I was serving as a Justice on the Montana Supreme Court and she served as a law clerk for Justice Morris. I got to know her more closely the following year when her husband Matt served as my law clerk.

Since then, I have watched her career develop as she worked for the public defender's office, the Lewis & Clark County Attorney and then in 2012 to 2019 as an assistant to then Montana Attorney General Bullock. As an Assistant Attorney General, Mary gained valuable courtroom experience trying homicide and sexual assault cases throughout Montana. In 2018, she and Matt were honored with the First Judicial District Pro Bono Publico Award for their representation of a high needs client. With this breadth of experience (public defender, prosecutor and pro bono honoree) Mary is uniquely qualified to serve as a trial judge.

Mary not only has an excellent professional background for judging, she has the people skills as well. She exudes energy, has a good sense of humor, a fierce work ethic and has empathy for those with limited means. Having prosecuted a state senator, a county commissioner and a county sheriff, she has shown resolve to hold people accountable for their actions regardless of their position in society or government.

The State of Montana would be well served with Mary Cochenour serving as a Judge in the First Judicial District. I strongly encourage the Commission to nominate her for that position.

Yours truly,

/s/ William Leaphart

W. William Leaphart
Montana Supreme Court Justice (Retired)

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 2:09:17 PM

From: Frederickson, Holly
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 9:28 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: Mary Elizabeth Cochenour

Good afternoon! My name is Holly Frederickson and I am the Justice of the Peace in Liberty County and the Chester City Judge. I am writing this email in support of the nomination of Mary Elizabeth Cochenour as District Judge for the Montana First Judicial District.

I have known Mary professionally for the past several years. I have known of Mary and her profound ability as both a lawyer and a prosecutor for a few years beyond that. Mary's reputation during her tenure at the AG's office was stellar.

Mary's experience is broad. She has served as both a Prosecutor with the AG's Office and a Deputy County Attorney for Lewis & Clark County. Additionally, she was a Public Defender. She has clerked for both a U.S. District Court and the Montana Supreme Court.

I had the pleasure of working with Mary on a case involving the elected Sheriff of one of our counties. (State of Montana v. Suta). This case was difficult because it involved an elected official and much about the case was a "hot topic" in his home community. Through a unique set of circumstances, I ended up presiding over the case. One of Mary's gifts is the ability to appropriately deal with sensitive cases. Through all of the frustrations of the case, Mary maintained an attitude of fairness toward the defendant. Her behavior in the courtroom was exemplary which wasn't true of everyone present. I was impressed with her professionalism and reasonability in bringing resolution to a very difficult case.

I believe that Mary Cochenour brings much skill and talent to the table and she would be an excellent choice for District Judge for the First Judicial District.

Sincerely,

[Holly Frederickson](#)
[Liberty County Justice of the Peace](#)
[PO Box 161](#)
[Chester, MT 59522](#)
[Telephone: \(406\) 759-5213](#)
[Fax: \(406\) 759-5473](#)
[Email: hfrederickson@mt.gov](mailto:hfrederickson@mt.gov)

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Thursday, September 24, 2020 10:02:38 PM

From: Jeffrey M. Roth <jroth@crowleyfleck.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 8:16 AM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Cc: Jeffrey M. Roth
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Mary Cochenour for First Judicial District Judgeship

Dear Judicial Nomination Committee:

Please accept this email for your consideration in support of Mary Cochenour for the upcoming vacancy in the First Judicial District. It has been my privilege to know Mary since our first day of law school together in 2002. After nearly 20 years of watching her flourish in the legal profession, I have no doubt that she will make an excellent appointment to the bench. Mary has embraced her pursuit of the law and justice from the beginning.

There are many different qualities that are necessary for a successful practice and transition to the bench, but the most important qualification is good judgment. Mary has always demonstrated an even-handed approach when confronting the various issues and disputes that one inevitably faces in the practice of law. Importantly, she recognizes the human dimensions that are always present. Her good judgment will serve her and the public well in this regard. Judges make decisions that profoundly impact the lives of the parties before the court – Mary has the right demeanor and appreciation of this point to take up the gavel in a manner that best serves the public interest.

Mary Cochenour is universally respected by her peers and those who have watched her career as a prosecutor. With close to two decades of practice, she is a seasoned veteran who understands the contours of practice and the courts. We would be fortunate to have her succeed the Honorable James Reynolds in the First Judicial District.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey M. Roth

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

STATE OF MONTANA

Tim Fox
Attorney General

Jon Bennion
Chief Deputy Attorney General



Department of Justice
Joseph P. Mazurek Building
215 North Sanders
P.O. Box 201401
Helena, MT 59620-1401

September 23, 2020

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

RE: Application of Mary Elizabeth Cochenour for First Judicial District Court Judge

Dear Members of the Commission:

Please accept this letter in support Mary Elizabeth Cochenour's application for appointment to the First Judicial District Judge position that will soon be vacant upon the retirement of Judge James Reynolds. As many of you probably know, I have practiced law in Montana for 33 years. During that time, I have appeared either as a private attorney or as a government attorney in most of Montana's Judicial District Courts, as well as numerous other Federal and Tribal courts.

I have known Mary for almost eight years during my time as Montana's Attorney General. I have had the great pleasure of seeing Mary in court as she prosecuted an important felony case, and I witnessed her impressive courtroom abilities in person. Mary is always very well prepared and professional, and she was a credit to the Office of the Attorney General during her seven years as an Assistant Attorney General.

A portion of Mary's time at the Department of Justice was devoted to representing the Montana State Fund in complex workers' compensation fraud cases. Mary received high praise from her client for successfully prosecuting workers' compensation fraud cases that recovered thousands of dollars for the State. These cases were widely reported in the media, and the media stories are instrumental in educating the working public as to the consequences of engaging in workers' compensation fraud. While the deterrent effect of Mary's work on these cases may be difficult to quantify, that work no doubt continues to save the State money to this day.

Mary is a person of superior intellect and character. She is a self-starter and a hard worker. She is passionate about justice and public service. She is even-tempered and friendly, but can be tenacious and focused when seeking to obtain justice for victims of crime. Mary Cochenour would be a great judge.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about Mary's application. Thank you serving as members of the Commission. I wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

TIM FOX
Attorney General

TELEPHONE: (406) 444-2026

FAX: (406) 444-3549

E-MAIL: contactdoj@mt.gov

WEB: mtdoj.gov

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Legal Services Division * Division of Criminal Investigation * Highway Patrol Division * Forensic Science Division
Gambling Control Division * Motor Vehicle Division * Information Technology Services Division * Central Services Division

Dear Montana Supreme Court,

I am writing this letter in support of Mary E. Cochenour for District Court Judge. I worked directly with Mrs. Cochenour while she was an Assistant Attorney General for approximately 8 years. I have over 21 years of sworn law enforcement experience and Mrs. Cochenour has continually stood out as the most ethical and fairest prosecutor I have ever worked with, in both State and Federal courts. Mrs. Cochenour has prosecuted and reviewed criminal violations ranging from domestic violence, worker's compensation theft, employer misconduct, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and homicide to name a few.

Mrs. Cochenour reviewed criminal investigations that I prepared as an Agent and always emphasized fairness and equality. Mrs. Cochenour was very cautious in regard to discovery violations, ensuring law enforcement provided all exculpatory evidence to provide a fair trial or whether to decline prosecution. It is in my experience that Mrs. Cochenour is the most qualified attorney to fill the vacancy for District Court Judge in the 1st Judicial District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anthony J. Poppler", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony J. Poppler
Helena, MT

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Thursday, September 24, 2020 10:01:54 PM

From: Butch & Rhonda Huseby <brhuseby2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 7:37 AM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] % of Lois Menzies - Mary Cochenour Public Comment

September 12, 2020

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 you today in support of Mary Cochenour's application for appointment as a judge in the first judicial district. Mary has demonstrated the compassion, knowledge, experience and energy to make her the right choice for this important position.

I have had the honor of working in varied public safety positions for nearly 30 years in the state of Montana. As a former Helena Police Officer, Montana Highway Patrol Trooper/Deputy Chief, Department of Justice Criminal Investigator, and Department of Justice Administrator, I have worked with many lawyers in varied legal disciplines. I have also been fortunate enough to work with some very good criminal prosecutors who accomplish remarkable work in public safety prosecution. One in particular I would place on the top of that fine list is Mary Cochenour. Her work history in the Montana Department of Justice Prosecution Services Bureau stands out for several reasons. Mary unabashedly projected an outward passion for her mission, displayed dogged persistence, and utilized constant logic and analytical skills that made her an exemplary prosecutor and shining example of an attorney who truly cared about each and every case. When I worked with Mary as a criminal investigator, we were the primary team that investigated and prosecuted Montana worker compensation fraud cases turned over to the Division of Criminal Investigation by Montana State Fund. Worker Compensation Fraud cases are complicated, time consuming, and require the self-discipline to dig into volumes of health care and insurance information in order to simplify for a jury the circumstances surrounding a prosecution for fraud. Although the criminal subject matter is not considered sexy or something many prosecutors desire to take on, Mary did so with great enthusiasm, passion, and success. Additionally, Mary displayed great compassion for people in bad situations who made bad decisions that caused them to violate the law by recognizing that not everyone is perfect and not everyone needs to be handled the maximum sentence possible. While working fraud cases Mary was also looked to for assistance with many other cases that would come through the door that involved Homicide, Partner Family Member Assault, Elder Exploitation, Embezzlement, and Sexual Assault. Her breadth and depth of expertise has built her extraordinary credibility in the public safety community. The partnership with Mary in bringing cases to closure was one of the most satisfying times of my career. Having a front row seat to watching someone of her caliber work with fairness, passion, and persistence while bringing justice and closure to victims was remarkable. For these reasons I assure you your selection of Mary Cochenour for this important position can be made with confidence by the Nomination Commission and the

people of the first judicial district.

Respectfully,

Butch Huseby
Helena, Montana

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Sunday, September 27, 2020 1:14 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: beverly <bevholnbeck@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 7:52 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Mary Cochenour for judge

I totally support a Mary for judge. She is not only extremely hard working, I have seen her rise above the stigma of women working in a difficult field and proven herself as a fair and honest person that can weigh the facts of a case and make difficult decisions that lead to a good outcome. She is a natural leader and won't hesitate to share her opinion while also considering all sides of an argument. She has years of experience in the legal system and would embrace this next challenge with the fortitude she has demonstrated in previous roles. Bottom line, she has what you need to step into this position.

Sincerely,
Beverly Holnbeck

Sent from my iPad

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Sunday, September 27, 2020 1:13 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Karen Kane <kp.kane@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 12:14 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Recommendation for Mary Cochenour (1st Judicial District Court)

September 26, 2020

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

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

I write to support Mary Cochenour's application for the First Judicial District Court judgeship.

Over the past several years, Mary and I were colleagues working for Montana Department of Justice's Prosecution Services Bureau. Fortunately for me, our professional association turned into a friendship. Mary is an engaging and dynamic woman, with an intriguing life story and the ability to take on any challenge from skiing the tough lines and hiking the difficult trails in Montana's mountains, to prosecuting complex trials in Montana's courtrooms.

She is indefatigable in her pursuit of excellence in any endeavor and is the kind of person that automatically lends her expertise in the service of others to help them achieve their goals. Her selfless spirit is demonstrated in her receipt of the First Judicial Bar Association's Pro Bono Publico award, her creation of Hiker Midnight to help women navigate the backcountry, and her leadership role in support of Girls Thrive, to help young women reach their athletic and personal goals. In addition, Mary was instrumental in forming Helena's Treatment Court with Judge Reynolds and is therefore uniquely qualified to continue the important work of the Treatment Court, a pursuit that I support personally and professionally, and that I know to be crucial to effectuating positive change in communities struggling with the fall out, in terms of both criminal and child abuse and neglect cases, stemming from individuals with untreated substance use disorders.

Mary's professional accomplishments as a skilled prosecutor for the Department of Justice speak for themselves; clearly she is well-acquainted with how courtrooms are run, the rules of evidence, and managing a heavy workload, skills that will serve her well as judge. What sets Mary apart, however, is her even temperament, her innate integrity that shines through her pleasant and compassionate character, and her ability to relate to people from all walks of life. She is well-suited to preside over a courtroom in the First Judicial District based on her impressive legal background, varied life experience, deep connection to the Helena community via multiple different outlets, and impeccable personal and professional reputation.

I sincerely hope that the Commission selects Mary to interview with Governor Bullock.

Respectfully,

Karen P. Kane

A. CLIFFORD EDWARDS
A. CHRISTOPHER EDWARDS
JOHN W. EDWARDS
TRIEL D. CULVER *
JACKIE S. SHIELDS **
MICHAEL P. SARABIA

* ALSO ADMITTED IN NORTH DAKOTA

** ALSO ADMITTED IN WYOMING



September 25, 2020\

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

VIA U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

RE: *In Support of Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Court Judgeship*

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

I first met Mary in law school. It was evident from the beginning that Mary had the envious ability to grasp difficult concepts quickly and an enthusiastic desire to dig into difficult concepts that did not come as easy. Coupled with that skill and grit, Mary was always able to articulate her reasoning and conclusion on any issue in a clear and concise manner. Her attitude, friendliness, and care for others was always authentic and infectious.

After law school, I continued to follow Mary's career. She has tried difficult cases on sensitive issues across the great State of Montana. She is a skilled courtroom lawyer and her experience will make her an excellent judge that is trial ready.

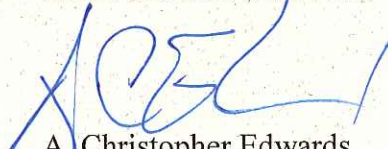
When I sat down to write this letter of recommendation, I thought about the shared qualities of the best judges I have had the privilege of practicing in front of. The qualities that stood out are hardworking, prepared, inquisitive, enthusiastic, compassionate, thoughtful, and fair. It has been my experience, when judges have these qualities cases move along faster, lawyers narrow the issues, and clients get to a resolution whether through settlement or trial more quickly. Mary possesses all these qualities in spades.

I also believe Mary's experiences outside the law are just as important as her legal successes. I think it is extremely important for a judge to have various life experiences outside of the law. Mary has that background. She is self-made. She has mixed and mingled with people from all facets of life. She has the experience to know that sometimes there is more than meets the eye, for better, or for worse. She has the experience and judgment to recognize those that need guidance and a chance. She can and will change lives from the bench. What more can you ask for.

In closing, I am confident that any attorney that practices in front of Mary will get a judge that is prepared, will listen to your arguments, the issues, the facts and do her absolute best to make the most just decision.

Sincerely,

EDWARDS & CULVER



A. Christopher Edwards

ACEIII/cf

Judicial Nominations Commission Montana Supreme Court
C/O Lois Menzies
VIA EMAIL ONLY

September 25, 2020

Honorable Members of the Judicial Nominations Commission:

It is my honor to recommend Mary Cochenour to replace Judge Reynolds as a District Court Judge. I have also written a letter in support of Christopher Abbott, either of these candidates would make a positive addition to the First Judicial District.

I took Mary's place at the Office of Public Defender in 2009 and worked as her opposing counsel for several years in Lewis and Clark County Justice Court. In my time as opposing counsel Mary was a dedicated public servant, respectful and courteous to all defense counsel and defendants.

I really got to know Mary when she and I took on opposing counsel roles in creating the First Judicial Treatment Court. Neither of our offices were strongly in favor of this new specialty court, however Mary helped to make sure we could move forward, she saw the benefit of these courts not just for the defendants, but also the community.

I have watched Mary in many trials, she is strong, passionate and dedicated to her work. The last time I was able to work with her I was a witness in a homicide trial, leading me to see yet another side of her work. She was organized, dutiful and supportive to me and all the other witnesses (and there were plenty). I was amazed at all the work and effort she and co-counsel put in before the trial.

I know that Mary will bring a compassionate, steady, approachable and most of all, fair voice to the First Judicial District Court and that is why she has my support.

Thank you,

Judge Anne Peterson
Helena Municipal Court
228 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601



Dale Schowengerdt
P.O. Box 797
Helena, MT 59624
406.457.2040 direct dial
406.449.5149 facsimile
dschowengerdt@crowleyfleck.com

September 25, 2020

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

Dear Commissioners,

I'm writing in support of Mary Cochenour's application for district court judge for the Frist Judicial District. I know Mary from when I worked as Solicitor General at the Attorney General's Office from 2014 to 2019.

Mary is an impressive lawyer and an impressive person who has the competence, skill, and temperament to be an excellent judge. She has an extensive record of winning difficult trials because she's able to process and understand large amounts of information combined with a knack for connecting with jurors. I think she's effective at connecting with people because she's so genuine and trustworthy, and obviously cares deeply about her work. Her deep knowledge of the law and strong work ethic also make her uncommonly efficient and able to thrive in the fast-paced and demanding work of a district court judge.

As a litigator, what I want in a judge is that he or she is engaged, competent, and fair. Mary meets those criteria in spades. She's an ideal candidate and I'm certain she would be an exceptional judge. I strongly encourage the Commission to send her application to the Governor.

Best regards,

Dale Schowengerdt

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 12:19 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Jennifer Davis <jdavis.helena@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2020 6:17 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mary Cochenour - Letter of Support

To whom it may concern:

Please accept this letter as support for Mary Cochenour's application for the First Judicial District Judgeship.

My name is Jennifer Davis. I have been a resident of Lewis and Clark County for 15 years. My husband is a small business owner and I have worked with local and state-wide nonprofits. Most recently with the Helena Tourism Alliance as a Community Outreach Director and currently as Alumni Director with Leadership Montana. My husband and I are active members of the community and I currently serve on the Board of Directors with Grandstreet Theatre.

I have known Mary personally for about 7 years. Before getting to know Mary I had heard amazing stories of her grit and professionalism, and when I got to know Mary I quickly learned she lived up to the stories and more. Mary has hosted several backpack trips to encourage women to venture into the wilderness. While a fun gathering of women, she always embraces the serious responsibility of teaching safety, responsibility, and stewardship in the outdoors. I was grateful for her invitation and welcoming nature. Even more I respected her leadership of "you can totally do it, and this is HOW you do it". She respected that not all women had the same experience in the outdoors that she did, and she did not want that inexperience to be a limitation to great adventures.

As I have gotten to know Mary I have witnessed that her open attitude to teaching and guidance is part of her core makeup. She can think clearly, be open minded, and make decisions quickly. Once I met Mary I was surprised that we had not known each other earlier. She is an active community member and volunteer that I am now happy to catch up with at multiple community events.

I strongly support Mary's nomination to the open Judgeship. I believe her varied life and professional experience will make her solid and respected judge.

Thank you for your consideration and service.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Davis
jdavis.helena@gmail.com

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 12:18 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Ed & Sharon Tregidga <estregidga@q.com>
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2020 4:07 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Fw: Mary Cochenour

From: [Tregidga, Sharon](#)
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2020 4:35 PM
To: [Ed & Sharon Tregidga](#)
Subject: Mary Cochenour

District Court Judge Nominating Committee:

I am writing in support of Mary Cochenour as she is being considered to replace Judge James Reynolds in the First Judicial District. I have known Mary for a number of years through my work in the Lewis and Clark County Courthouse. My experience with Mary is that she is very knowledgeable and efficient in the various roles of Public Defender, Deputy County Attorney and Deputy Attorney General. Mary is always professional and considers all aspects of a situation. Mary possesses integrity and is also attentive to details. I have found Mary to be not only professional but also sincerely interested in people's lives. On several occasions when Mary did not know about a particular area she sought me out to gain my perspective or knowledge on a subject clearly being willing to admit she doesn't know everything and was willing to learn.

One concern I had with Judge Reynolds leaving was the continuation of family and treatment court. Mary has a strong desire to continue these types of court to help improve the outcomes for folks dealing with difficulties in their lives.

I believe that Mary possesses the qualities needed to be a well rounded efficient and compassionate judge. I would encourage her name to be submitted to the governor for consideration for this very important position.

Yours truly,

Sharon Tregidga
Helena, MT 59601
406.431.2020

Cook, Kevin

From: Menzies, Lois
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 12:17 PM
To: Cook, Kevin
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour

From: Michele Zentz <michelezentz@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2020 3:07 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] MC Support

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Michele Zentz and I am voicing my support for Mary Cochenaur to serve as District Court Judge in the First Judicial District.

As a school counselor for the Helena School District, I consider it my most important role to teach our children Empathy: *to feel or understand how another human being is feeling*. We practice observing face and body clues, we consider different points of view, and we anticipate how they would feel. Once students grasp the concept of Empathy, they learn that "Compassion is Empathy in Action!" *Compassion* is connecting to another human being by helping with our words or our actions.

Mary's Compassion intersected our life paths. She connected large groups of women together to help educate and share in her passion of backpacking. She single-handedly organized groups 12-15 women to scale over mountain tops. I became part of this first on a 3-day Crazy Mountains trip, then on a 4-day Wind River Trip, and finally on a 3-day Beartooth Mountain trip.

I remember thinking the first year that there must be a catch since she wasn't charging us anything. I also hesitated because of the potential tenuous stew mixing all those female personalities might create. But after that first year, I was hooked. After that, I vowed never to say no to an opportunity to connect with groups of women again. Who knew you could find a new tribe in your forties?

Upon reflection, it was larger than a miracle that year-after-year we would enter the wilderness a hodge-podge of personalities and emerge from the wilderness like a sisterhood, it was her Empathy. Whether we were on mile one or mile 36, she was subtly, yet acutely dialed into each and every woman's social, emotional, physical and mental point-of-view. Her guidance and decision-making stemmed from there as leader of our groups.

When it was time to put her "Empathy into Action," she dished up large portions of Compassion: like the time she stayed behind with a woman who suffered debilitating altitude sickness or the time a woman accidentally dispensed her bear spray on her skin or the time that a woman was nearly hypothermic or the time she used her satellite phone to helicopter a man out of the wilderness who we found with a broken leg. She handled each adversity with graceful discernment, composure, and knowledge.

Mary is a gift to our community and would be a gift to the First Judicial District. She is focused, she is fair, and she is capable of making difficult decisions. She can see the world from multiple points-of-view, without

creating a hierarchy of importance to those point-of-views. She has this amazing capacity to see pluralistically, yet equally. I can think of no better attributes for a judge than the ability to breathe the life of Empathy and Compassion back into our systems of democracy.

Sincerely,
Michele Zentz
(46)475-5756

September 26, 2020

Judicial Nomination Commission
Office of the Court Administrator
P.O. Box 203005
Helena MT 59620-3005

Dear Commission Members:

This letter is among many supporting Mary Cochenour's application for the district court judgeship being vacated by Judge James Reynolds. I've practiced in front of Judge Reynolds since he took the bench and regardless of whether he ruled in my favor or against me, it has always been a pleasure to appear in his court. Mary has similar characteristics of unfailing courtesy and professionalism.

Mary and I worked together for many years, first as opponents when she started at the Office of the Public Defender in 2007, and then as co-workers when Mary became a deputy county attorney in 2008. Whether we tried cases against each other or together as co-counsel, Mary always brought her "A" game. She was prepared and diligent and a fierce advocate for her cause whether it was an indigent client, or a victim of a brutal attack. Mary referred to the State v. Crider case in her application materials. I had the honor of being her second chair for that trial. It was the first domestic violence case I'd worked on. Mary's commitment to helping a woman who for many years had been incapable of helping herself made a lasting impression on me.

Even after Mary moved on to the Attorney General's Office in 2012, we talked frequently about our cases, mostly Mary providing a statewide perspective gleaned from her travels around Montana prosecuting the most serious kinds of offenses against people of all ages and from all walks of life. She was an invaluable resource in the Attorney General's Office, always willing to take a phone call and provide whatever assistance she could.

The First Judicial District is exceptionally busy and only becoming more inundated with all sorts of cases. The County Attorney's Office is on track to file a record number of felony cases in 2020, from property crimes and DUIs to serious, violent crimes against adults and children. The caseload is daunting. The increase in the number of criminal cases has led to an increase in the number of trials each judge must preside over. The orderly administration of justice requires a judge who can make a thoughtful, well-reasoned legally sound decision without undue delay. Mary has the qualities necessary for a judge in this district: extensive trial experience, sound legal reasoning, common sense, strong work ethic, professional demeanor and the ability to make good decisions under pressure.

You have many fine candidates to choose from in this process. It is a privilege to recommend that you forward Mary Cochenour's name to Governor Bullock for appointment to fill the vacancy left by the retirement of Judge Reynolds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'm' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Melissa Broch
Deputy County Attorney
Lewis and Clark County

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:29:06 PM

From: Sealey, Jeff
Sent: Sunday, September 27, 2020 1:06 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: Mary Cochenour comment

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

Members of the Commission,

I write to support Mary Cochenour as a judicial candidate for the First Judicial District Court. I have known Mary for 12 years. I had the pleasure of working with her at the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office, where we represented Lewis and Clark County in civil matters and subsequently prosecuted misdemeanor and felony crimes. I also know Mary and her family on a personal level. Our children attend school together, we see each other regularly at social engagements, and my wife has been on multiple backpacking trips Mary organized.

As I'm sure you will hear from other commenters, Mary is known to be a tenacious prosecutor. And I do not envy those criminal defendants who took their cases to trial with her on the other side. What you may not hear as much about is how conscientiously Mary approached her duties as a Deputy County Attorney and then as an Assistant Attorney General. I recall multiple discussions between prosecutors during which she recognized both the victim's and the defendant's circumstances and needs in order to come to a just resolution of a case.

Mary's life path is littered with interesting stories filled with music, adventure, instruction, and caring. I suspect her varied life experiences prompt her to see legal matters in a holistic way. Not surprisingly then, she was instrumental in developing and implementing the First Judicial District Treatment Court program. She, along with others, put a lot of time and energy into getting the program off the ground, and its continued success is a testament to the solid framework Mary pushed to create. I had the opportunity to serve as the prosecutor for that program for a time after Mary moved to the Attorney General's Office. I saw firsthand the successful outcomes treatment court participants achieved because of Mary's hard work. I also observed the respect Judge Reynolds and the other treatment court team members had for her.

Mary is fearless, in her professional life and her personal life. I know few people who can match her in that regard. She is honest, fair, and hard-working. In short, she would make an excellent judge, and the First Judicial District would be lucky to have her.

Sincerely,

Jeff Sealey
Helena resident and attorney

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:29:40 PM

From: pennymartin@charter.net <pennymartin@charter.net>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 9:38 AM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Cc: 'Penny Martin'
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - Mary Cochenour

Judicial Nomination Commission:

My name is Penny Doig-Martin, and I was one of the Official Court Reporters for the First Judicial District from 1986 through 2016. I reported three years for the Hon. Gordon Bennett and 26 years for the Hon. Jeffrey Sherlock. I saw and appreciated firsthand the qualities of a great judge.

I starting working with Mary Cochenour in 2007 when she came on board as a public defender. She appeared regularly from 2008 through 2012 as a deputy county attorney, then occasionally through 2016 as an assistant attorney general. I reported many trials that she prosecuted. She was prompt, well-prepared, even tempered, articulate, and extremely competent. She was respectful of litigants, opposing counsel, court staff, and the court. Mary is one of the best speaker/communicators I have had the privilege of reporting.

Mary has proven herself to be a leader. I believe her to possess the patience required to deal with the many pro se litigants trying to navigate the system. Dependent neglect actions and pro se dissolutions can be highly emotional, and I believe she would have the skill and insight to successfully dispose of those cases, while leading litigants through very difficult times in their lives, in a most compassionate and respectful way.

Criminal law and motion is very fast-paced and can sometimes be an overwhelming and daunting task, occurring weekly, with as many as 30 cases per week, taking place in a 1-3 hour time period. Mary has the criminal experience and expertise required to hit the ground running.

I respectfully recommend the appointment of Mary Cochenour to the position of District Court Judge.

Penny Doig-Martin, RPR

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:30:42 PM

From: Thomas Perkins <Thomas1592@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 11:52 AM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Application of Mary Cochenour

Judicial Nomination Commission and Hon. Steve Bullock, Governor of Montana

Dear Members of the Commission and Governor Bullock,

I am writing concerning the application of Mary Cochenour for appointment to judicial office. By way of background, I am a senior judge in the State of Nevada, where I practiced law for more than 40 years. I have served in a number of public service positions, including Nevada State Public Defender, District Judge and Justice of Peace, and practiced law, both privately and as a public lawyer. As a criminal lawyer, I tried more than 50 jury cases, including the prosecution of a capital case here in Douglas County, Nevada, in 2000-2001, where I met Ms. Cochenour when she was working as a journalist for the Reno Gazette Journal. We renewed our friendship and acquaintance last year when I was in a group she guided on a backcountry trip in the Colorado Rockies.

Although I am not about to presume what is best for the people of Montana, I am proud to vouch for her character and integrity, and believe she would make an outstanding judge. She has a positive attitude, and a quick and curious intellect. She is motivated by a service ethic that is evident throughout her career. There is no evidence of an ambition for power or any unusual ego problems. I really like the way she has explored and worked in the world outside the courthouse; the best judges have a sense of the people they serve informed by life experience, and she has that in abundance. She is an excellent listener and teacher, and genuinely likes the people with whom she works.

Thanks for the chance to comment on her application. If you have any questions, or if I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to call or write. Tom Perkins

P.O. Box 880
Minden, NV 89423
775 790-1511

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:31:13 PM

From: DAN SUE DELLAROSSA <rossa4349@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 1:47 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 1st Judicial District - In Support of Mary Cochenour

Judicial Nomination Commission

Dear Commission Members:

I am writing to endorse the nomination of Mary Cochenour to fill the position of District Court Judge for the First Judicial District (Broadwater and Lewis & Clark Counties). I initially met Mary during the investigation phase of the Joseph Campbell shooting of my neighbor, Tim Newman, in the Falls Creek/Dearborn Canyon area. This was a very high-profile complicated homicide case. Mary and her team diligently investigated the case and ultimately charged Campbell with deliberate homicide. As you can imagine, our community was shattered by these events and anxious to see Campbell arrested, charged and tried. Mary and her team tirelessly worked the case for several years from investigation, to trial, and appeal (which ultimately led to a plea agreement). The outcome brought resolution to the case and allowed our community to begin to heal. This was a complex homicide investigation with many witnesses and experts. Mary excelled at the task presented to her with confidence, skill, professionalism, integrity, and empathy. As a testifying witness and member of the Falls Creek community, I had the utmost confidence in Mary and appreciated her willingness to take the time to communicate as we navigated through the twists and turns of the criminal process. Mary continually showed compassion and empathy to the victims/community throughout the process, addressing our fears and concerns. Mary's work ethic and dedication is beyond reproach.

I have been blessed to work in the legal field as a paralegal for 36 years in civil litigation with many well-respected successful attorneys. Mary is an A+ lawyer. Mary exemplifies all of the attributes that a Judge should possess - skill, integrity, work ethic, and professionalism to name a few. I strongly urge you to forward Mary's name to the Governor for consideration. Thank you.

Sue L. Della Rossa, CLA
Paralegal
UGRIN ALEXANDER ZADICK, PC
2 Railroad Square, Suite B
Great Falls, MT 59401

(406)771-0007

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:31:49 PM

From: Jon Bennion <bennionjw@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 27, 2020 8:40 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Mary Cochenour

Dear Commission Members:

I wholeheartedly give my recommendation for Mary Cochenour for the open district judge position in the First Judicial District. Mary is ready to take on the challenges and workload of being a district judge in one of the busiest judicial districts in the state.

I first got to know Mary in 2002 when we entered the University of Montana law school's first year class together. As a student there, Mary was dedicated to learning and being prepared for class. When she was selected amongst many in the class to work summers at the Yellowstone County Attorney's office, I knew she was destined for great things in the field of prosecution.

Our paths crossed again when I joined the Attorney General's office in 2013, where Mary was the special assistant AG prosecutor for workers' compensation fraud. Mary outperformed every other prosecutor who had filled that role in the past based on her convictions and recoveries for the Montana State Fund. As soon as there was an opening on the regular prosecution team, there was no doubt Mary was the right choice. I could always count on Mary being one of the strongest performers in the office.

Mary understands the next appointee will have to be confirmed by the Legislature and, possibly, run in a contested race for the position in 2022. She is ready to do both with the same fierceness and drive that has made her a successful lawyer.

Mary's work ethic, experience in the courtroom, and record of accomplishment as an attorney leave no doubt in my mind regarding her ability to be a great judge. Please forward her name to Governor Bullock for his consideration.

Sincerely,

Jon Bennion

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:33:06 PM

From: Zach Zipfel <zachzipfel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 3:49 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment in Support of Mary Cochenour

I write in support of Mary Cochenour's candidacy for the open judge's seat in the First Judicial District.

I've known Mary well for over 14 years now and during that time have found her to have a first-rate legal mind, along with an even temperament, both of which would serve her well as a judge.

We first worked together as clerks at the Montana Supreme Court. While there, I was impressed with how quickly Mary was able to grasp what was really at issue in a case, beyond what was simply argued in the briefs. I also found her to be a strong writer and someone who recognized the impact the law had on people's lives.

Following my time at the Supreme Court, I moved to the Public Defender's Office in Helena -- where I replaced Mary who was leaving to join the Lewis and Clark County Attorneys' Office. We overlapped for about a week at OPD, during which time she showed me the ropes of public defense work. Whether it was cultivating good working relationships with opposing counsel, shooting straight with the judge, or telling when your client was lying to you, Mary's mentorship that week was critical to my ability to hit the ground running.

It was further helped when she and I took up cases against one another, literally almost a week later, when she started at the CAO. While there, I found her to be a fair opponent -- recognizing when my client had a legitimate point and being willing to cut a deal, while also recognizing when they didn't. Her fairness was demonstrated repeatedly at the CAO. She never pushed a case simply to make a point. She applied the law to the case in a reasoned and straightforward manner. When we tried cases against each other, each of us argued our case zealously. When it was over, we had a good laugh in the hall outside the courtroom.

Mary and I also worked together at the Attorney General's Office, although our day-to-day jobs did not overlap as she was in the Criminal Division and I in the Civil. Nevertheless, I watched over the years, even after I left for my current position, as she successfully prosecuted more high-profile and complex cases. I have no doubt the strong legal mind, even temperament, and fairness I saw in her in our early years working together served her well in those cases. Likewise, I have no doubt it would serve her -- and Montanans -- well if she were

selected as a judge in the First Judicial District.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Zach Zipfel
Helena, MT
(406) 529-1365

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:38:13 PM

From: Jennifer McKee <jennifermckee1130@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 4:55 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment in support of Mary Cochenour

Dear Members of the Nomination Commission,

Thank you for your work in filling our community's judicial vacancy and for the opportunity to submit my comments.

I have known Mary Cochenour for 13 years. We have been professional colleagues at the Montana Department of Justice; we've volunteered together. I was her daughter's Girl Scout leader for years. I have seen the way Ms. Cochenour conducts her personal and private life over many years and in every way she acts with integrity, compassion, thoughtfulness and perseverance.

Her work as a prosecutor speaks for itself. She has earned the commendations of Prosecutor of the Year as well as Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year. Her work often put her in the most challenging cases in our state and she served her clients -- the people of Montana, often seeking justice for young victims -- with unusual compassion and tenacity.

Ms. Cochenour lives her entire life that way. She lives the values Montanans rightly expect in a judge and would make an excellent judge in our community.

Again, thank you,

Jennifer McKee

From: [Menzies, Lois](#)
To: [Cook, Kevin](#)
Subject: Public Comment -- Cochenour
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:39:54 PM

From: Logsdon, Kate <Klogsdon@wipfli.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 5:30 PM
To: MT Supreme Court,
Subject: [EXTERNAL] First District Court Judge Appointment

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission

My name is Kate Logsdon. I have lived in Helena for the past 20 plus years. I have worked for Wipfli LLP for the past 10 years and have been involved heavily in the community. I have known Mary Cochenour for several years now through community events and other activities in Helena. I would recommend Mary to be appointed to be the next First Judicial District Court Judge. Mary has the temperament to be judge. She is fair, honest, hard working and a leader in our community. She is thoughtful and can easily make difficult decisions. I look to Mary for many things in life and know that she would approach this appointment with the utmost of professionalism and care. For what my comments are worth. Thank you for your time.

Kate Logsdon

Kate Logsdon

Service Line Operations Analyst / 406 204 3807 Office
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FAX (406) 586-9720
www.LawMT.com

September 28, 2020

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

Via email only
mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

RE: Letter of Support for Mary Cochenour

Dear Commission Members:

I am honored to offer this letter of support for Mary Cochenour to serve as district court judge in the First Judicial District Court.

I met Mary during law school, seventeen years ago. Our love of the outdoors served as common ground for our friendship initially, but I soon grew to respect and admire her as a law student as well. Mary was and is all-in. Whether it was studying late in the library or making time to provide a few sage words of advice for those of us a year behind her in school, she provided a model of hard work and a passion for the law.

During one of our law school summers, Mary and I also both worked for the Yellowstone County Attorney's Office in the criminal and civil offices, respectively. Everyone knew Mary—she has that special combination of natural talent in the courtroom, intelligence, and emotional sensitivity that make her so good at what she does.

Our paths continued to cross, and after graduation we overlapped in our clerkships at the Montana Supreme Court. Mary demonstrated that in addition to her courtroom prowess, she can digest complex legal scenarios in an analytical and careful way. This early window into Mary's career that I observed demonstrated even then she was on her way to this pivotal point in her career, and her star has only continued to rise through her work, most recently, for the Montana Attorney General's Office.

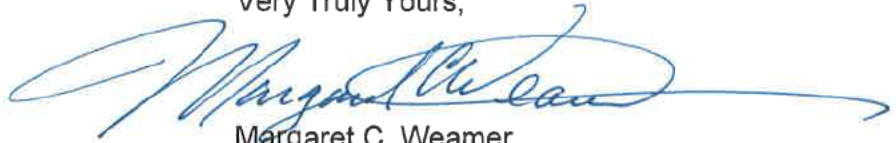
In the years since, while I pursued a private civil practice, Mary continued to serve the public with the dedication and zeal she demonstrated in those early years. Reading the letters of support for her judicial application from Justices, Judges, law enforcement, opposing counsel, and numerous colleagues and friends, several themes emerge that I wholeheartedly agree with. Mary works incredibly hard, with a doggedness that is necessary to arrive at the right decision. Mary believes in the system of justice, as demonstrated by the fact that opposing counsel will attest that she is fair-minded and respects the process. And finally, and probably most importantly, Mary is thoughtful, empathetic, and kind.

Mary's life outside of the law compliments and reflects those attributes as well. As a dedicated leader, she organizes and leads groups on backpacking adventures, where teamwork

is necessary. As a devoted mother, she encourages a sense of adventure and hard work in her children. I love seeing them as a family out mountain biking in Big Sky, hearing about her kids learning to play instruments, and her active participation in all of it.

We as a bar should be so fortunate to have such an incredibly qualified colleague join the bench. Thank you for your consideration of Mary for this honor. She would serve us well.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Margaret C. Weamer", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Margaret C. Weamer

GALLIK, BREMER & MOLLOY, P.C.

Attorneys at Law
777 East Main Street, Suite 203
Post Office Box 70
Bozeman, MT 59771-0070
(406) 404-1728

September 28, 2020

Via Email Only

Montana Judicial Nomination Commission
mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

Re: *Mary Cochenour*

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I submit this letter in support of Mary Cochenour's application for appointment to the First Judicial District Court. I became acquainted with Mary when I served as Chief of Consumer Protection in the Attorney General's Office. I can assure you that she would be an excellent district court judge. She is bright, articulate and fair minded. Mary has extensive courtroom experience, which will serve her well if she is appointed to the bench. She would treat litigants and their counsel with respect. Based on my opportunity to observe her work, I can assure you that she would be well-prepared. If appointed, she will diligently follow legal precedent, while also seeking to accomplish justice based on the circumstances of every case.

In sum, I encourage you to forward Mary Cochenour's name to Governor Bullock for his consideration. I am confident that if appointed, she will be an outstanding judge.

Sincerely,



James P. Molloy

HUNT & FOX PLLP

Attorneys at Law

James G. Hunt
Patrick T. Fox

111 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 3A
Helena, MT 59601
Telephone: (406) 442-8552
Facsimile: (406) 495-1660
jhunt@huntlaw.net
pfox@huntlaw.net

William E. Hunt, Sr.
(1923-2016)

September 28, 2020

Email: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

Judicial Nomination Commission

c/o Lois Menzies

Office of Court Administrator P.O. Box 203005

Helena, MT 59620-3005

**RE: First Judicial District Court Judge
Application of Mary Cochenour**

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am writing to support Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Court Judge position. Because I am submitting this on the last day, by the time you get to my letter, you will likely be tired of reading so I will be brief and hopefully succinct.

I have known Mary for many years. Matt, her husband, and Mary lived across the street from us on Third Street in Helena for several years. I also have had cases against Mary when she worked at the Lewis & Clark County attorney's office and at the Attorney General's office. Thus, I know her both professionally and personally.

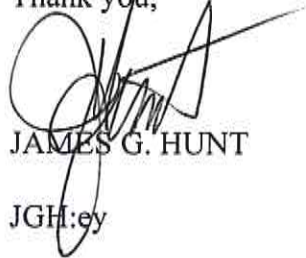
It is without reservation that I unequivocally and enthusiastically endorse her for district court judge. She is hard-working, compassionate, kind, determined, steadfast, open-minded, and will strive to be fair. She has a passion for life in general that becomes obvious when you look at what she has accomplished from high school to the present. To say that she does not come from a privileged background is an understatement. Given this background, she is in a unique position to be empathetic toward those who would appear in front of her as a district court judge. She is also smart, hard-working, and I am confident will get her work out.

I told my wife, Barb Howe, I was writing this letter. Barb is a MSW child therapist who occasionally appears in court – against her will. Barb asked me to tell you she is confident Mary would listen as a judge and make decisions based on the child's best interests. She also believes Mary is determined and hard-working.

Barb also asked me to tell you she thinks Mary and Matt have raised great children (yes, I know their names but will not name them here) and were great neighbors. Barb was sorry to see them move. I echo Barb's feelings.

The Commission would do well to nominate Mary for Governor Bullock's consideration.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JG Hunt", written over the printed name "JAMES G. HUNT".

JAMES G. HUNT

JGH:ey



McDONALD LAW OFFICE PLLC

Jonathan McDonald
Attorney at Law
P.O. Box 1570
Helena, MT 59624
406.442.1493

September 28, 2020

via e-mail: mtsupremecourt@mt.gov

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

RE: Mary Cochenour/First Judicial District Court Vacancy

Dear Commission Members:

I write in support of Mary Cochenour's application for appointment to the vacancy on the bench of the First Judicial District Court and encourage the commission to forward her name to the governor.

I have known Mary since law school. She enjoyed a career in journalism that predates her decision to become a lawyer. I am also a former journalist and believe the skills that profession required will serve Mary well on the bench. She has to quickly absorb information, make decisions about who is telling you the truth, write well and withstand what can at times be harsh criticism from those affected by your work. As a person, Mary has a strong work ethic, a practical approach to life and a fundamental sense of fairness without which justice cannot be done. These qualities will not only allow her to serve the Helena community as a judge, but have already permitted her to enjoy a successful career at the bar.

The job of a district court judge is not an easy one. Montana judges are called upon to make heart-wrenching choices, even when there is no clearly right answer. They must make legal determinations in cases involving complex fact patterns in obscure areas of law. They must decide whether to issue warrants sending law enforcement into the homes of Montanans, whether legislative acts meet constitutional muster and who gets the kids when a marriage fails. Mary can do these things even when they are hard. She has the education, experience and gravitas to do them well.

I strongly encourage the commission to forward Mary's name to the governor for consideration.

Sincerely,

McDONALD LAW OFFICE, PLLC

By: 

JONATHAN McDONALD



September 28, 2020

Judicial Nomination Commission
Office of Court Administrator
P.O. Box 203005
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission,

Please accept this letter in support of Mary Cochenour for the appointment to the bench for the First Judicial District, Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties. I had the good fortune to meet Mary during our time together in law school at the University of Montana. I now, nearly 20 years later, continue to have the deep privilege and honor to not only call her a classmate and colleague, but, more importantly a friend.

In the nearly 20 years I have known Mary, I have had the privilege to know her as a student of the law, an attorney, a mother, and a friend. In each of those roles, my admiration and respect for her grown throughout the years. Mary is a person that is difficult to contain on a piece of paper – and I say that as the utmost compliment. Mary's passion for life, dedication to justice, love for other, and determination to excel place her in a league of her own.

Mary's resume speaks for itself and she is surely qualified for this appointment; however, even as a professional she is more than just a prosecutor and an attorney. Mary has excelled as prosecutor and earned the respect of members of the bar across the state of Montana. Mary is certainly a talented, powerful litigator. Mary embodies all the characteristics of a capable and successful attorney - she is intelligent, hard-working, poised, focused and honest. However, in consideration of this appointment Mary is more than just a talented litigator with the traditional qualities of a good attorney. Mary effortlessly balances strength with compassion, determination with grace, excellence with humility, and leadership with an eagerness to learn. The combination of her extensive experience in courtrooms across the state with her combined with her work ethic, intelligence and honesty make her the ideal individual for this appointment.

JENIFER REECE
Attorney

Address: 107 East Oak, #3C
Bozeman MT 59715
Phone: 406.414.0146
Email: reece@reecelawmt.com
Visit: reecelawmt.com

Mary's professionalism is not limited to her time as an attorney. She is also actively involved in her community and volunteers with organizations such as Girls Thrive, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies and the Montana Outdoor Heritage Project. In addition, she has empowered her community through speaking engagements empowering women in the outdoors and how her own childhood adversity provided her with resiliency later in life. Mary's willingness to share her story and abilities to empower and encourage others speaks to her remarkable character.

It is without hesitation and with great honor that I recommend Mary for this position.

My recommendation is certainly based on her talent as a litigator, her intelligence as a human, and her command of the law as an attorney; however, I take the greatest honor in recommending her as a friend. The adjectives that describe Mary are numerous. She is hard-working, diligent, dedicated, honest, kind, compassionate and driven. But beyond mere adjectives, seeing Mary's character is imperative. Mary embodies what it means to be appointed to the highest honor of our legal system – a judge. She has unparalleled integrity, is dedicated to justice, is calm in the face of adversity and is compassionate to others. I have watched her demonstrate these traits time and time again in the nearly twenty years I have known her.

Mary's presence is commanding. She has the unique ability to gain one's respect and also share her quick wit and easy smile. There is nothing cookie cutter about Mary. She has overcome obstacles throughout life that many would shy away from. She has chased her dreams and her passions with enviable success. As a result, she has gained life experience that leads to wisdom and knowledge of the human condition that will allow her to successfully balance competing interests as a judge. I would find it an honor to practice law in her court.

I, without hesitation, recommend Mary Cochenour for appointment to the bench for the First Judicial District. Lewis and Clark and Broadwater Counties, their judges, attorneys, and residents will be fortunate to have her serving them.

Best Regards,

Jenifer S. Reece

Leo J. Gallagher, County Attorney
Melissa Broch, Deputy
Katie Jerstad, Deputy
Jeremy Gersovitz, Deputy
Ann Penner, Deputy
Fallon Stanton, Deputy
Charles Lane, Deputy
Nicho Hash, Deputy
Peter Delmoe, Deputy
Josh Nemeth, Deputy
Jacob Griffith, Deputy
John Nesbitt, Deputy
Rebekah Hall
John Hall



Lewis and Clark County
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228 Broadway
Helena, MT 59601
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Lewis and Clark County COUNTY ATTORNEY OFFICE

September 25, 2020

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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I write to commend to you the application of Helena attorney Mary Cochenour for the First Judicial District Judgeship.

I have been an attorney in Montana since 1992. Mary and I first met in 2007 when she started with the Office of the State Public Defender, where I was working. When Mary moved to the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office, she showed a doggedness and tenacity that surprised even this old legal dog. When I followed her to this office, we were both initially on the civil side. When she moved to the prosecution of criminal cases, she took on the hardest of cases and worked them from the ground up, securing convictions in some of the county's most brutal sex crimes. She is unflappable. We stayed in touch when she moved to the Attorney General's Office, primarily to discuss particularly cantankerous cases we each had.

Strangely, our lives have moved in parallel tracks. We were both news reporters before law school and since graduation have worked almost exclusively in criminal defense and prosecution. I believe that as it has been for me, the reporting experience leaves one unafraid of the keyboard, able to boil down complex material to the important nugget of truth, and well rounded as a person.

I do not hesitate to call her a trial attorney's trial attorney. She is able to pack up and get on the road and drive to some of the most remote areas of Montana to try some of the most heinous crimes imaginable. It is my opinion that her experience and training have amply prepared her for the First Judicial District Judgeship.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,


Jeremy Gersovitz

MIKE GEE

2764 Stacia Ave. | 406.865.0110 | trouthater@gmail.com

September 28, 2020

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

RE: Support for Dan Guzynski, Ole Olson, Mary Cochenour, & Chad Parker

Dear Members of the Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am honored to write this letter of support for my colleagues who have thrown their names in the hat to fill Judge Reynolds' seat in the First Judicial District. Dan, Ole, Mary and Chad comport themselves with honesty, integrity, thoughtfulness, and an even-keeled temperament. Those qualities are vital in the pursuit of justice. Those qualities absolutely transfer to being a Judge.

I would rather be labeled a suck-up than let an opportunity to support my colleagues whom I care about very much go by without comment. The truth is each of them have helped shaped my view of what it takes to do justice and frankly, how to live life. My view is each would bring their individual strengths to the bench and be an asset to the judiciary.

Our criminal justice system is under fire. Fair-minded men and women are needed now more than ever to temper the criticism and instill confidence. Not for nothing, but my opinion is the current Judges in the First Judicial District are already doing just that. If one of the four of my colleagues are selected, they will immediately be able to join that pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mike Gee', with a stylized, flowing script.

Mike Gee
Assistant Attorney General
Prosecution Services Bureau

September 25th, 2020

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

To Whom It May Concern:

Greetings. I write in support of Mary Cochenour's candidacy for the First Judicial District for Broadwater and Lewis & Clark counties. I have known Mary over the past 10 years in primarily a professional capacity. Mary and I have collaborated a handful of times on criminal cases that involved domestic and sexual violence. As a county prosecutor in Helena, and again as a prosecutor with the Montana Department of Justice, Mary prosecuted cases in a thorough and effective manner, including using expert witness testimony to enhance her case and address any obstacles she had. Mary has always treated me with a great deal of respect, appreciation, and acknowledgement that as advocates, we have an important and essential perspective to add. I have always been well prepared by Mary. She communicates directly and effectively. I have seen her at work in both a court setting and deposition and she does a fantastic job. I am not easily impressed, but was by Mary.

Mary has also dedicated herself to her family and community. She has worked with us as an organization to put on expert witness training for advocates, as well as, training prosecutors and other criminal justice professionals. I have also had the opportunity to see Mary handle a legislative committee when testifying on complicated and difficult pieces of legislation. She has made an impact for survivors in Montana. And I, and they, are very grateful to her for doing so.

One of the things I admire most about Mary is her adventurous spirit. She believes in lifting other women up instead of pushing them down. She has led many women I know on extensive back packing trips many of which have told me they've been changed by the experience. I also happen to know she is a great mother and friend. Someone any of us would want in our corner.

But most importantly, I think Mary would make a fantastic judge. I would need many pages to describe all of the ways she will be great at this role. But I will summarize by saying she will be someone who makes other women proud. She will be someone that people can look up to and respect. People will leave her court feeling better about themselves than they did coming in. She will create a culture and community of appreciation, respect and tolerance. I can't wait to see her in this new role. She will be a huge asset to our community.

I greatly hope you select Mary Cochenour as your choice for our next First Judicial District appointment. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Kelsen Young

September 28, 2020

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

Whitney Welsh Jankiewicz


RE: Mary Cochenour

Dear Judicial Nomination Commission:

Please consider this letter of highest recommendation for Mary Cochenour for appointment to the First Judicial District bench. Although you will receive many nominations for the district court judgeship, none will be as capable as Mary. Her life experience provides her a depth of judgment that will be unparalleled by other applicants.

I have served as a prosecuting attorney for Ada County in Boise, Idaho since 2006. Prior to that I clerked for the Montana Supreme Court for the Honorable Justices Brian Morris, Patricia Cotter, and John Warner. Growing up in Montana and attending both undergraduate and law school at the University of Montana, I would be proud to have Mary serving in the role of District Court judge in my home state. I have known Mary since our first year in law school. The very person that she and always has been lends itself to the demanding task of serving her community as a trial court judge.

As outlined in her application, she brings with her a depth and width of life experience that those who march through undergraduate, go on to law school, and then begin their careers lack. With those layers come the development of good judgment and integrity. Serving as a prosecutor and handling felony-level cases, I know firsthand that each criminal case brings complicated issues that affect victims, the community, and the defendant's lives. Mary will be able to absorb all these factors—whether seen or unseen—and fashion appropriate sentences. I am also confident that litigants will always know the reasons behind Judge Cochenour's rulings, even if they don't agree. Such is the watermark of an excellent judge.

Do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further insight into the benefit Mary Cochenour would bring to the Montana judiciary. I am not overstating it when I say that you would be lucky to have her.

Sincerely,

Whitney Welsh

Whitney Welsh
Idaho State Bar #7518

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

Dear Commission Members:

I am writing this letter to express my support for the appointment of Mary Cochenour as a District Court Judge for the First Judicial District. She is passionate and driven, with a history of excellence in the courtroom. The First Judicial District would benefit greatly from her presence on the bench.

I first met Mary in 2005, while we were both law students at the University of Montana School of Law. I was a first-year student, and Mary was a third year. As I'm sure you're aware, the UM School of Law is a very concentrated population of students. Mary already had a reputation for excellence as a member of the law school's trial team. Although our meetings were brief, I was always impressed with how approachable and friendly she was.

I crossed paths with Mary again in 2008, when I was a new hire with the Office of Public Defender (OPD). Mary was one of the attorneys who helped to train me before she left to pursue employment with the Lewis and Clark County Attorney's Office. As a co-worker, I greatly admired how hard she fought for her clients, even when there was a mountain of evidence against them. She was also always willing to offer advice on how to handle difficult cases. She was sorely missed when she left OPD.

As a Deputy County Attorney, Mary was, quite literally, a force to be reckoned with. She and I were opposing counsel in countless bench and jury trials here in Helena. When Mary was opposing counsel, I always knew I had a battle on my hands. Simply put, her courtroom skills are incredible. Mary fought for the State and its victims of crime with vigor. Our trials were always hard-fought and passionate. I often say that any accolades I receive in trial are attributable to Mary, as she was absolutely the hardest opponent I faced in a courtroom and that by doing so, Mary has made me a better trial attorney. As an Assistant Attorney General, Mary has only continued to build her reputation as a fierce advocate for the State and its victims of crime, taking on some of the toughest cases in the state.

That is not to say, however, that Mary's experience is only limited to what is seen in the courtroom. Mary is also a proficient and excellent writer. She is an excellent scholar of the law and I have no doubt if Mary did not know the answer to a legal question, she would be able to find it easily. Although she is a fierce advocate, she is incredibly personable. I have no doubt she possesses the correct temperament to effectively run a courtroom and to deal with the public.

I am also impressed with Mary's written commitment to the First Judicial District Treatment Court. In full disclosure, I have been the Deputy County Attorney assigned to the program since November 2019. That being said, however, I have witnessed the strength of the program and seen some of the program's most incredible successes. I strongly believe treatment courts are necessary. Given Mary's prior experience developing and working in treatment courts, I have full faith in her ability to lead an effective and successful treatment court.

As you can see from her application and the various letters already submitted in support of her application, Mary has had an incredibly diverse work history and legal career, which will undoubtedly benefit her on the bench. Mary and I come from very similar backgrounds. I know firsthand how hard she had to work to make it to where she is today. I have no doubt she will apply that same focus and drive as a judge, and she will be a fantastic one. She absolutely deserves to have her name forwarded to the Governor for consideration and I urge you to do so.

Sincerely,



Ann B. Penner
Deputy County Attorney
Lewis and Clark County