

January 4, 2025

Montana Supreme Court, Chief Justice
Montana Supreme Court
215 N. Sanders Street
Helena, MT 59601

Via email: rbird@mt.gov

Re: Associate Montana Water Court Judge – Letter of Support for William C. Fanning

Honorable Chief Justice:

I strongly support William Fanning for the position of Associate Judge for the Montana Water Court. My career in water rights has spanned the many phases of the general water right adjudication. I retired from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation in 2009 as the Water Rights Adjudication Bureau Chief. Subsequently, I've served as a private consultant and expert witness in water right cases. I have had the pleasure of working with Bill on water adjudication issues for the past 8 years. While there are many excellent candidates for the Associate Judge position, Bill stands out.

In representing his clients, Bill understands the critical role the Water Court plays in the very livelihood of water users. He is well aware of the financial burden placed on water users to protect their property rights, from mediation, litigation, and to enforcement. He understands the duality of protecting water rights at the District Court and at the Water Court.

Bill is detail oriented and can see the big picture. He is articulate and succinct. He has an insatiable thirst for knowledge and possesses a calm and thoughtful demeanor. He understands the importance of history, the history of the adjudication process and the history of water use. Bill is a dedicated professional and well-rounded caring person.

Sincerely,

Jim P. Gilman