

Androlewicz, Kathleen

To: McLaughlin, Beth
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Stephen R. Brown's nomination for Chief Water Judge

From: william@fanninglawpllc.com <william@fanninglawpllc.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 29, 2024 3:31 PM
To: McLaughlin, Beth <bmclaughlin@mt.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on Stephen R. Brown's nomination for Chief Water Judge

Hon. Chief Justice Mike McGrath
Montana Supreme Court
c/o Beth McLaughlin, Office of the Court Administrator
Re: Nomination of Stephen R. Brown as Chief Water Judge

Your Honor:

Please accept this letter in support of Judge Stephen R. Brown's appointment as Chief Water Judge of the Montana Water Court. Judge Brown is eminently qualified to lead the Water Court because of his experience, knowledge, temperament, and commitment to water law.

I have seen Judge Brown in a variety of professional roles, and he has excelled in all of them. First as an oil and gas law professor, he took an extremely complicated subject matter and made it understandable and interesting. Then as an attorney in private practice, I found myself litigating against him where I was deeply impressed by his mastery of the procedural and substantive law. Although he was a formidable opponent, his professional demeanor was always pleasant, to the point, and straightforward. Watching him take a deposition, and politely and thoroughly elicit the information that he needed, was a masterclass in that practical skill.

In his role as a judge, I have tried cases before him where I found him fair and thoughtful. Judge Brown's decisions show respect for the parties and their arguments and have done much to advance the law with clarity. Additionally, Judge Brown's experience practicing law gives him the context to appreciate what happens outside of the courtroom and how to craft solutions to complex disputes that will hold up under administration of water rights.

I unreservedly support Judge Stephen Brown to be the next Chief Water Judge of the Montana Water Court.

Sincerely,

William Fanning, Esq.
Fanning Law PLLC
william@fanninglawpllc.com
406.220.2805

15 S. Idaho St. Ste. #4

Dillon, MT 59725

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