

Supreme Court Clerk's Office - Keller, Heather

From: Liz combs <combsea@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 22, 2016 1:24 PM
To: (SUP) Clerk of Court Office
Subject: Constitutional violations of right to adequate legal counsel for water protectors

Ms. Penny Miller:

The follow is a comment in support of the Petition to Permit Temporary Provision of Legal Services by Qualified Attorneys From Outside North Dakota.

There is an emergency affecting the North Dakota legal system resulting from the high number of arrests related to anti-Dakota Access pipeline matters. There are an insufficient number of qualified and interested criminal defense lawyers in North Dakota currently licensed to represent the over 500 people arrested. Many criminal defense lawyers have already maxed out their public defender allotments. Many others have declined to take on these cases, often due work load capacity, time constraints or conflicts of interest related to the pipeline industry. Furthermore, any requests for change of venue have been denied.

These defendants, self-identified as Water Protectors, deserve fair trials and I am concerned that due to the reasons stated above, the North Dakota court system is currently strained in its capacity to ensure that defendants receive these fair trials.

As such, I request that the North Dakota Supreme Court accept and approve the Petition to Permit Temporary Provision of Legal Services by Qualified Attorneys From Outside North Dakota.

Please help all parties ensure that defendants are able to obtain the legal counsel they need to be given their fair day in court.

Thank you.

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