

Please accept this correspondence as to the Vacancy in Judgeship No. 5, with Chambers in Cavalier and Langdon, Northeast Judicial District.

First off, let me say that Judge Laurie Fontaine's experience, expertise, and professionalism will be sorely missed and a void will be created as her delivery of legal orders and calendaring of cases is in my opinion second to none.

Secondly, I have practiced law for some forty years in Minnesota and laast ten in both Minnesota and North Dakota. I have experienced contact with Judge Fontaine since June 1, 2019 in Cavalier, Langdon, and Walsh Counties. Our firm, Hardwick & Nelson Law, PLLC, took over an IDC contract for representation of 1/2 the public defense contract by assuming and substituting around 25 cases around June 1, 2019.

Since then we have opened roughly 20 cases monthly in Cavalier and Pembina Counties. We have been assigned roughly 150 cases, at roughly 30 hours a case. Some way more, closer to 100. We have approximately 25 open cases now.

It is my humble opinion that a Judgeship should remain in pembina and Cavalier Counties. A smooth transition of legal services with an accommodating and flexible court schedule is necessary and crucial for the administration of justice. Our firm is 85 miles away and the sheer travel is three (3) hours per trip. The Court has utilized electronic means for Initial appearances and more mundane administrative appearances but we have a one a month in court appearances date with several other telephonic appearances. For example, on our next court appearance on November 10, 2020, we have 11 court Appearances scheduled in Cavalier, Pembina County.

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