

# THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

CORY J. SWANSON  
CHIEF JUSTICE



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July 18, 2025

Greg Gianforte  
Governor, State of Montana  
Office of the Governor  
Montana State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

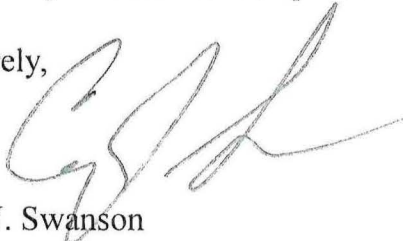
I am writing to thank you for supporting the addition of two new district court judgeships in the Thirteenth Judicial District in Yellowstone County. As you know, the population growth and crime rates in Montana's largest city have produced a court caseload that exceeds what the current eight district court judges can effectively handle. The excellent leaders in the Thirteenth Judicial District have undertaken several case-management innovations to help them better meet the needs of our citizens. This includes a court docket specialization concept the judges developed, in cooperation with the Legislature. We believe these improvements, combined with the addition of two district court judges, will greatly improve timelines across all types of legal cases.

The community is on board with these innovations and the addition of two new judges. In May, I went to Billings and met with the District Judges, County Commissioners, County Attorney, and leaders of the Office of Public Defender. All stakeholders appreciate your and the Legislature's support for these judicial positions. The County Commission has a plan to create temporary chambers for the new judges while they complete the renovation of the Courthouse to create additional courtrooms and chambers.

With all these pieces in place, the new law creating these judgeships has taken effect. I am writing to inform you there are two district court vacancies in the Thirteenth Judicial District in Yellowstone County. The Legislature has funded their positions and their support staff to begin January 1, 2026. Therefore, I am writing to ask you to initiate the process for your appointment of these judges. The new appointees will be required to run for retention in the 2026 General Election.

Please don't hesitate to call on me if I or the Office of Court Administrator can assist you in any way to fulfill this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CJS', is written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Cory J. Swanson  
Chief Justice

cc: Kristen Juras, Lieutenant Governor ✓  
Hon. Jessica T. Fehr  
Hon. Donald L. Harris  
Hon. Thomas Pardy  
Hon. Brett D. Linneweber  
Hon. Rod Souza  
Hon. Mary Jane Knisely  
Hon. Colette B. Davies  
Hon. Ashley Harada  
Terry Halpin, Clerk of District Court, Yellowstone County  
Chris Belback, Court Administrator, Yellowstone County  
Dave McAlpin, Supreme Court Administrator