

January 16th, 2025

Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Letter of Support for Katharine Lace Kuykendall, Applicant for Montana District Court Judge, 20th Judicial District for Lake and Sanders County, Department 2.

Judicial Nomination Commission,

It has come to my attention that Katharine Lace Kuykendall has applied to the open District Court Judge Seat, 20th District. I am honored to throw my full support behind that effort.

I have known Kate since I moved to Plains, MT in 1995 and we have maintained a friendship ever since. I know Kate to be intelligent, fair-minded, dignified, and compassionate, the perfect personality for a Judge as I see it.

She is well qualified, having graduated from the University of Montana School of Law, and has practiced within myriad legal areas of concentration. Furthermore, she grew up in Sanders County where she now resides in Plains. Her legal acumen and deep roots in the District uniquely qualify her to serve the People of Sanders and Lake counties and uphold Constitutional Law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Swift G. Moon', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature area.

Swift G. Moon, MSgt USAF (retired)
521 N. 9th Ave
Bozeman, MT 59715

From: [Jennifer Osborn](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] support letter for Katharine Kuykendall
Date: Thursday, January 16, 2025 4:54:51 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in support of Katharine (Kate) Kuykendall as an applicant to fill the vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District. I have known Kate all of her life and strongly support her desire to serve as judge. I grew up in Sanders County, and while I now live in Missoula, I have strong ties, as does Kate, to the people of Sanders County. I want what is best for the people of the county, and it is my personal belief that Kate would be an outstanding judicial representative for the residents of Sanders and Lake counties. Kate has the ability and desire to interpret and apply the law as it is written, regardless of her own opinion or that of the parties, and I believe it is this skill which is the most important to her potential success as a judge.

Other characteristics Kate displays in abundance which would contribute to success as a judge are integrity, discretion and trustworthiness. I have referred friends to her for legal matters, and she can be trusted to never disclose any information that is not freely available in the community. Kate has an incredibly strong moral compass and in a world where every day brings a new scandal, weakening the public trust in individuals and institutions, Kate stands as an exceptional counter to this trend. Kate has led an exemplary life and I have no doubt will continue to do so.

Kate is a serious, responsible person and any task she undertakes is thoughtfully and carefully accomplished. She is also intelligent and hardworking, and her work ethic and integrity would ensure that the people of Sanders and Lake counties would have a judge who would work tirelessly to apply the law on their behalf.

In summary, I support Kate in her application to serve as judge, wholeheartedly and without reservation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Osborn, MD FACP

NominateJudges

From: Virginia Fortner <vfortner@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 24, 2025 2:09 PM
To: NominateJudges
Cc: Kate Kuykendall; Virginia Fortner
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Twentieth Judicial District Judge Nominee

To Whom it May Concern:

I want to wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of Katherine (Kate) Lace Kuykendall to fill the vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District. I have known Kate her entire life and appreciated her fair-mindedness, intelligence, wisdom, and balanced ability to express her thoughts. She has an eye and ear for detail and is able to consider all sides of an issue to discern what is best according to law. She is a person of mature judgment.

Kate now resides in Sanders County (as I did for more than a decade) and, since graduating the University of Montana School of Law, has gained experience in dealing with non profits, tribal matters, and courtroom matters across the entire state.

More recently, Kate helped me by editing a book I am writing; I believe she will serve the people of Lake and Sanders Counties in the same thoughtful, knowledgeable, honest and responsible way she aided me. My endorsement comes without reservations.

Virginia Fortner, Ph D

Box 551684
54-469 Honomakau Rd
Kapaau, HI 96755

NominateJudges

From: Christine Foster <christine.foster90@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 27, 2025 5:09 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Katharine Lace Kuykendall

Dear Hannah Slusser,

I am writing to offer my strong recommendation for Kate Kuykendall's appointment as a District Court Judge in Montana's 20th Judicial District. I have known Kate for many years and am confident that she possesses the experience, character, and dedication necessary to excel in this vital role. I have no doubt that she will bring strength and integrity to Montana's District Court.

Kate's career demonstrates her steady commitment to justice and fairness. Her legal background reflects not only her technical expertise but also her thoughtful approach to understanding the complexities of the law. Having served as an attorney and teacher, she has honed the skills required to adjudicate complex cases with impartiality and professionalism.

What sets Kate apart is her sense of community and her ability to approach her work with empathy and diligence. Her reputation for ethical integrity and her capacity to listen attentively, understand diverse perspectives, and make balanced decisions are essential qualities for any judge. Her colleagues and community members alike recognize her as a person of high moral character who treats others with respect and kindness, while maintaining the rigor and impartiality required for this very appointment.

In addition to her professional qualifications, Kate's demonstrated ability to work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders makes her uniquely suited to the bench. I have personally witnessed her exhibit a refined temperament to handle challenging situations with grace, even in the stickiest of situations, folks in Kate's path feel heard and respected. I believe this is critical when tasked with upholding the integrity of the law.

I wholeheartedly support her candidacy and urge you to give her application your most serious consideration.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information or insights regarding my support for Kate Kuykendall.

Thank you for considering this recommendation.

Respectfully,
Christine Foster

NominateJudges

From: GARY SANKS <gsanks@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, January 24, 2025 3:40 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Katherine (Kate) Kuydendall

Attn: Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office

Greetings to whomever is involved in the selection process for Twentieth Judicial District Court Judge.

I strongly support and recommend Katherine (Kate) Kuykendall for this position. I've known Kate and her family for many years. Kate, and all of her family members, are upstanding citizens, intelligent people, with strong moral convictions. Kate grew up in Sanders County and received her law degree from the University of Montana.

She now lives in Sanders County and understands the needs and concerns of the rural communities of both Lake and Sanders County.

I've always been very impressed with her ability to consider all sides of an issue before making a decision or comment. Kate would be an excellent choice for this position. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,

Gary Sanks
Paradise, Montana



Missionary Gospel Fellowship

P.O. Box 1535
Turlock, CA 95381-1535
Phone: (209) 634-8575
Fax: (209) 250-3736
Web Page: www.mgfhq.org
Email: mgfhq@mgfhq.org

January 31, 2025

Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Letter of Support for Katherine Lace Kuykendall, Applicant for Montana District Court Judge, 20th Judicial District, for Lake and Sanders Counties, Department 2

Judicial Nomination Commission:

I am very happy to have learned that Katharine Lace Kuykendall has applied to the open District Court Judge Seat, 20th District. Please accept this letter as my wholehearted support for her candidacy.

As a property owner in Sanders County (in the City of Plains) and General Director of a non-profit corporation registered in Montana, I am very interested in having perceptive, intelligent, knowledgeable and fair-minded judges refereeing the legal processes in the 20th Judicial District. I have known Kate her whole life. I have had the opportunity to see her intelligence and hard work from an early age, and seen her develop into a perceptive and committed seeker of justice. Her family culture has centered around fair-minded opportunities for all. I have seen her as an adult develop her natural gifts with education, and hone those skills with focused labor. She has weathered very difficult circumstances in life that have given her a sensitivity that cannot be attained without such personal trials. All of these attributes make her the outstanding candidate to fill this seat.

In addition to her natural ability and cultivated skillset, Kate is a Sanders County native and long-time resident. She knows and understands the people of this area, and is committed to the flourishing of the communities of these counties. Katharine Lace Kuykendall is the best person to fill the open 20th District Court Judge Seat.

Respectfully,

A.J. Hyatt III
General Director, MGF

Hannah Slusser,

I am thrilled that Katharine has chosen to throw her hat in the ring for the position of District Court Judge in Montana's 20th Judicial District, and I have witnessed firsthand the qualities that make her an exceptional candidate for this role.

Katharine's mastery of the law, combined with her ability to analyze complex issues, makes her a standout professional. Sanders and Lake Counties need an individual like Katharine on the bench—she approaches tasks with meticulous preparation and an unwavering commitment to fairness, her decisions are grounded in sound legal reasoning, and she is no stranger to navigating complex matters. Her ability to pilot challenging situations with both decisiveness and empathy is something I have always admired.

In addition to her legal acumen, Kate is a natural leader. She fosters collaboration and respects differing viewpoints. Her integrity and dedication to upholding the principles of justice are what Montanans need more of.

Katharine Kuykendall has my full support!

Sincerely,

Daniel Foster

January 26, 2025

Governor Greg Gianforte
Attn: Hannah Slusser
Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, Montana 59620

Governor Gianforte,

I am honored to write this letter in support of Katharine (Kate) Lace Kuykendall as she applies for appointment to District Court Judge for Montana's Sanders and Lake Counties. Having had the privilege of knowing Kate her entire life—first as a neighbor and then as a close friend—I have witnessed her unwavering dedication to others, her reflective approach to living, and her profound commitment to fairness and justice.

Kate possesses an impressive academic background that reflects her intellectual rigor and capacity for nuanced legal analysis. Her accomplishments in higher education underscore her dedication to understanding the law from multiple perspectives, laying the foundation for her outstanding legal career.

Since April 2021, Kate has been a self-employed attorney, successfully managing a diverse legal practice that includes estate planning, criminal defense, business transactions, contract drafting, real estate, and corporate and nonprofit governance. Her experience is both varied and deep, exemplifying her deliberate efforts to build expertise across different legal fields and court systems in Montana, and demonstrating her ability to analyze complex issues and work productively with diverse personalities and systems.

Her dedication to public service is evident in the over 100 hours of pro bono work she has provided, as well as her role as the personal representative for her late father's estate—a role that deepened her appreciation for the legal system's impact on individuals and families.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Kate is a person of exceptional character. She is law-abiding, intelligent, ethical, and principled. Her thoughtful, open-minded approach to every situation is matched by her dedication to fairness and justice. Kate's decade of exploration and life experience before her legal career has equipped her with unique wisdom, empathy, and real-world insight.

Through my many conversations with Kate, I have been struck by her ability to listen deeply, analyze thoroughly, and communicate clearly. She approaches every challenge with persistence and integrity, and her impartiality ensures she considers all perspectives before making decisions. These qualities make her exceptionally well-suited to serve as a District Court Judge.

I have no doubt that Kate Kuykendall will bring the same excellence, dedication, and compassion to the bench as she has to every other aspect of her life. Her diverse legal expertise, strong ethical foundation, and unwavering commitment to justice position her as the ideal candidate for this critical role.

Thank you for considering my wholehearted recommendation. Please feel free to contact me at lsanks@gmail.com if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

Lauralea Sanks

February 10, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great honor and pleasure that I write this letter about my experiences with Kate Kuykendall as an attorney, advisor and friend for three decades and witnessed her in all aspects of her life: academically, personally and professionally.

As an employee of Neptune Aviation Services, Inc. and Northstar Jet, Inc. for 34 years (former President/CEO/Vice Chair of the Board), and pilot working in the aviation industry, I have worked with thousands of individuals and hundreds of businesses, private and public sectors. I feel confident recognizing the sound character of an honest, dependable, caring individual who understands people. Kate personifies these qualities. Her work ethic, competence, knowledge, unbiased and insightful wisdom are unmatched.

One of the qualities I appreciate most in Kate is her integrity. I have observed firsthand on many occasions the positive effects of Kate's dedication and passion for 'doing the right thing,' which makes her a valued and trusted community leader. You can trust her at her word even in the most stressful situations. This trait ranks at the top of my list when I think about the person I would want to be a District Judge.

Discerning, objective, patient, tactful, compassionate, and understanding are words that have been forgotten by many people in today's political and professional worlds. However, these are virtues that personify Kate. You can trust Kate will look at the merits of each case and apply law fairly, regardless of the way the person looks, dresses or their lot in life. You will not find anyone more dedicated to ensuring her professional services are the best in the industry.

She is very attentive and a good listener. Speaking with Kate, I find she gives you her full attention and time. She is a terrific writer and exceptional communicator. In my years working with executives, pilots, politicians and government officials as well as other people with strong personalities, I have discovered that communication is the best skill an individual can possess to succeed. This communication includes both listening and being able to articulate your own thoughts and vision. Kate is a master of both sides of this equation. These communication skills make her a born, natural leader.

If Kate is appointed to District Court Judge for Lake County and Sanders County, our communities will reap the benefits for decades to come. I am more than willing to discuss my endorsement of Ms. Kate Kuykendall to a depth greater than allowed by a letter. Thank you for the opportunity to express my recommendation.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kristen Nicolarsen
1792 Blue Slide
Thompson Falls, MT 59873
(406) 207-6045

February 6, 2025

Governor Greg Gianforte
Attn: Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District

Dear Governor Gianforte,

The voters of Sanders and Lake Counties have a problem. Recent turmoil on the District Court bench has created an environment of uncertainty among residents, with economic cost as well as less tangible cost to families. I've personally been impacted by the inability to schedule a reasonable judicial resolution to a real estate matter, costing me a significant sum of money.

Thankfully, you have a solution for those voters. Not just a short-term fix, but potentially a long-term, stable solution that could result in two decades worth of fair and balanced application of our legal framework.

That solution is Katharine Kuykendall.

Like the other applicants I see on the roster, Katharine is good at being a lawyer. She's spent time in courtrooms all over the State of Montana working for the Office of the Public Defender, working to improve the lives of the people of our state. She's got the academic experience to deal with any judicial complexity, in the form of a degree in Sociology/Criminology, a Masters degree in Public Administration, and a Law degree (with honors, as well as a certificate in Alternative Dispute Resolution). Her academic credentials are rock solid, and provide a foundation for deep understanding of any dispute that comes before her as judge.

The solution, however, runs deeper yet than the degrees.

Katharine was born in the Clark Fork Valley Hospital in Plains, and graduated from high school there. She went through several programs at the University of Montana, then made a conscious decision to spend some time outside of Montana to deepen her understanding of how the world works. She lived and worked overseas, teaching in local communities, seeing firsthand how the lives of everyday people are affected by government, by education, by economic pressures, and by media.

She brings all of that understanding back to Montana at a time when our state is growing and changing daily, whether we like it or not.

What sets Katharine apart from the strong pool of applicants here isn't the basic credentials of experience and education, or even the benefit of a broad worldview backed by a Sanders County upbringing.

The element that makes the difference, that makes her appointment the perfect solution, is her backbone.

Katharine has the moral fiber to know what's right, and the fortitude to stick to that decision even when external pressures would sway a lesser person. I've watched for more than 40 years as she's navigated incredible life challenges that would have derailed many of us, and done it with warmth, equanimity, and a balance that makes it look easy from the outside. She's demonstrated a moral outrage against unfairness from her earliest years, and I know from long experience that she will support our Constitution and legal framework with clear-eyed candor and impartiality. I also know she plans, whether or not appointed, to run for election to this role in the next cycle because she's in this for the long term.

Katharine has worked, and learned, and gained perspective with a specific goal in mind – to use that experience to make Montana a better place. She'll do the work, and she'll do it well, and her communities in western Montana will reap the benefits for years to come.

Katharine Kuykendall is your solution.

Respectfully submitted,



Justin Kuykendall
41 River Road East
Plains, MT 59859
justin@airgo.org

Investment Banker, Glidepath Capital Partners

Member, Board of Directors
Neptune Aviation Services
4301 Corporate Way
Missoula, MT 59808

JAY RENO, pllc.
Attorney at Law

February 12, 2025

Governor's office
Attn: Hannah Slusser
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Endorsement of Katharine Kuykendall for District Court Judge

Dear Governor:

I am writing this letter with enthusiastic support of Katharine Kuykendall's application for appointment to the Twentieth Judicial District as a District Court Judge. I have known Katharine for 18 years, initially as a fellow law student at the University of Montana School of Law where we took many classes together, and subsequently as a colleague where I advised with many of her criminal, business, and estate clients on complex issues. Through these contacts, I have come to know both Katharine and her legal work well and I am confident that she will make an exceptional judge serving the people of Montana in that role.

Katharine's professional reputation and my personal experiences working with her show her to be honorable, ethical, diligent, and a well-versed attorney. She advocated like a bulldog for her clients, but acts with a tact and finesse to her legal arts when it comes to resolving heated or difficult matters. She conducts herself in a professional and congenial manner and I know many of her colleagues breathe a sigh of relief when she is the attorney on the other side. They know she works hard for her clients but always keeps a calm and level head - trait much desired in a sitting Judge.

I have written recommendations for others but I cannot think of another reference where I felt as strongly about an individual's potential to excel in a position of such high importance and regard. It is for these reasons that I provide her with my most sincere recommendation for the Twentieth Judicial District Judge position. Katharine will make a great judge and civil servant for the people of Lake and Sanders counties well as the whole of the Montana Judicial branch. Katharine was born in Sanders County and will serve her home community well.

Warmest Regards,

Jay B. Reno

Jay B. Reno

396 Gehrke Road Port Angeles, WA 98362

Phone: (406) 261-5754

email: jayrenolaw@gmail.com

Netzer, Krautter & Brown^{PC}

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

DONALD L. NETZER**
don@nkbattorneys.com
RYAN ALEXANDER PAYNE*
ryan@nkbattorneys.com
1060 South Central Ave., Ste 2
Sidney, MT 59270
T: (406)433-5511
F: (406)433-5513

JOEL G. KRAUTTER**
joel@nkbattorneys.com
CHASE E. BROWN**
chase@nkbattorneys.com
JAMES REAVIS*
james@nkbattorneys.com
301 North 27th Street #100
Billings, MT 59101
T:(406)534-7800

***licensed in North Dakota and Montana*

Offices in Sidney and Billings

*Licensed in Montana**

February 12, 2025

To: Hannah Slusser, Governor's Office, P.O. Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620

Re: Katharine Lace Kuykendall, 20th Judicial District vacancy

Governor Gianforte,

I am honored and proud to submit a strong public comment in favor of Kate Kuykendall, a Plains native, my friend, and a great human being who lives in the district and will be a fantastic asset to the judiciary.

I met Kate in law school and was quickly floored by what an impressive person she is. Kate has great listening skills and devours knowledge. Seemingly not finding law school challenging enough, she completed a master's degree at the same time and used her skills to help run the Montana Justice Foundation, ensuring that legal justice could be delivered for all Montanans, regardless of their income.

All too often you get judicial applicants who are focused in one line of work when the job of judge requires knowledge and practice in all fields of law. Kate is steeped in a variety of law, including child abuse/neglect, probate, insurance, property law, and criminal defense. Kate's experience in taking on the "tough" cases will serve her well as the district's next judge.

More importantly, Kate also has real-world experience outside the "legal bubble" in running her own business, teaching English to others, and managing a non-profit. The judiciary will benefit from a judge with business experience who appreciates how small businesses operate and get work done for Montana.

Montanans who have to come to court are facing some of the most difficult, adverse situations in their lives. Kate has faced substantial challenges from what life throws at us and has emerged as a stronger person because of it. I have no doubt she will respect the rights of all defendants while also holding convicted criminals accountable for their actions. Kate knows all too well the impacts of crime on victims who never asked to be put in such a situation.

With Kate you will be getting a well-rounded and qualified nominee. I strongly advise that you move her to the interviewing stage. You are going to be impressed.

Sincerely,

/s/ James Reavis
James Reavis