

12 April 2022

Letter of Recommendation for Alisha Rapkoch for Sanders County District Court Judge

Dear Mr. Gianforte:

I am writing to offer my support for Ms. Alisha Rapkoch as the new Sanders County District Court Judge. I had the pleasure of working under Ms. Rapkoch as an intern in the Summer of 2021 while she was the managing attorney for the Missoula Office of the State Public Defender: Conflict Division.

I am confident that Ms. Rapkoch would make an excellent judge. She has an outstanding legal mind, but perhaps more importantly, she respects the law and American democracy. As our nation continues to face pernicious polarization, we need judges who care more about upholding the law and our sacred democratic institutions over partisanship. Ms. Rapkoch is just the right person for that role. During my time with Ms. Rapkoch, I witnessed exceptional work ethic both as a manager and as a lawyer. Her ability to prioritize her clients and her employees amid challenging personal circumstances was inspiring. As a lawyer Ms. Rapkoch is sharp, well-spoken, and quick on her feet. However, she is also incredibly compassionate and kind to everyone she encounters whether it is a client, a witness, or the other attorneys. Ms. Rapkoch also has a special talent for making people feel heard, and I can hardly think of a more important skill to have a judge.

Ms. Rapkoch possesses all the credentials, skills, and personality traits to make her the judge Sander's County deserves. She is unbiased, possesses a brilliant legal mind, and she cares about people. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyxus Friesen', written over a horizontal line.

Alyxus Friesen

Greg Gianforte
Governor, State of Montana
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 2000801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing in support of Alisha Rapkoch as appointee for Montana's Twentieth District Court Judgeship. Alisha is an excellent attorney, manager, and leader; she is someone I deeply respect and admire.

I first met Alisha when I applied for the administrative assistant position at the Public Defender Conflict Division A Office in December of 2021. Alisha was the newly hired Managing Attorney of the Conflict Office and after interviewing with her, I knew I would be lucky to work with her. I was hired for the position and worked as Ms. Rapkoch's assistant and office manager. I quickly grew to love my work, due in large part to working directly with Alisha. She was highly motivated about creating an efficient work environment and forming a team that was strong and passionate about their positions.

As a manager, Alisha welcomed the staff to approach her with office-related concerns or issues, and she would carefully listen and respond. Alisha's efforts ensured that all matters were heard, considered, and explained clearly which had a profound impact on inner-office communications and overall productivity. She directed a team-approach to finding resolutions that would work best for the office; that approach considered the immediate and long-term needs of both staff and clients.

Alisha has a strong sense of integrity and is genuinely invested in helping grow and develop the communities she has invested in. Most importantly, Alisha brings joy to the office. Working within the legal system can be weighing, but Alisha found ways to make even the toughest days bearable. She is dedicated to her work and has a passion for the law that is truly inspiring. I can confidently say she would be an excellent addition to Montana's Judicial System.

Sincerely,



Jordan Sweeney

From: [Preston Davis](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Cc: [Rapkoch, Alisha](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support - Alisha Rapkoch
Date: Thursday, March 24, 2022 12:08:21 PM

Governor Gianforte,

I'm writing to recommend Alisha Rapkoch for appointment as a District Court judge in the Twelfth Judicial District. It's an easy letter for me to write – Ms. Rapkoch will make an excellent judge. Over the past 18 months she has been my co-worker and supervisor at the Office of the Public Defender. She has consistently demonstrated the qualities I hope to see in our judges.

Ms. Rapkoch has boundless energy and has chosen to commit that energy to the pursuit of justice, both for her clients and the community. She can reliably be found at her office hours before sunrise and after sunset. She has taken on cases 7 hours away from her home because she knows that she can achieve success where previous attorneys could not. I trust her to work as hard and as long as it takes to do it right. I trust her to bring that passion to the court.

Judges are managers, of a sort, and Ms. Rapkoch is a strong manager. She understands how to build a team mindset, how to support employees when they need it and how to set up processes that will help an office function effectively. On both a qualitative and quantitative level, our office improved dramatically during her tenure. I expect the same results in the Twelfth Judicial District.

Most importantly, I trust Ms. Rapkoch's judgement, legal and otherwise. Over the past five years, I have had the pleasure of working with almost all of the criminal defense attorneys in the Missoula area. Ms. Rapkoch is one of two lawyers that I regularly contact for advice and information. She is a reliable source for creative solutions and knowledge of obscure case law.

You can trust Alisha to commit her energy, wisdom and strong management skills to the court and I hope you will select her.

Thank you,

Preston Davis

Slusser, Hannah

From: Kevin Rapkoch <kevrapkoch@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 17, 2022 11:17 PM
To: NominateJudges
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support - Alisha Rapkoch

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Alisha Rapkoch; Applying for Twentieth Judicial District Judgeship

My name is Kevin Rapkoch, and I am Alisha Rapkoch's brother-in-law. On a personal level, Alisha Rapkoch is a caring, generous, and passionate person. She strives for success in all that she does, whether it be small things like making her nieces and nephews smile, or big things like planning a wedding, while recovering from foot surgery, taking care of family, and managing a tremendous case load at work. She is an extremely hard-worker, always fair and honest, and is an excellent listener.

I am a Registered Nurse, worked many years in Intensive Care and Post Anesthesia care, and now work as a Nurse Practice Consultant for the Arizona State Board of Nursing. I work with attorneys that defend nurses, as well as AAGs and the Chief Counsel for the Office of the Attorney General. I work with and deal with good attorneys and not-so-good attorneys every day. I've seen what it takes to be a good, honest, and fair attorney.

I've seen Alisha Rapkoch practice law in public courtrooms. I've listened to her fair, balanced, and neutral philosophy regarding law. She is exactly what this world of justice needs in a judge. In a time where the credibility of the legal system is in question, I believe Alisha Rapkoch will stand as a firm anchor of just, fair, and impartial judgement. Her judicial wisdom is second-to-none of anyone at her experience level, and based on her career trajectory and rapid growth as a lawyer thus far, she would surely become an extraordinary judge should she be given the opportunity.

I truly believe it would be a mistake not to select Alisha Rapkoch as a judge. If she is selected, I have no doubt that she will go down in history as one of Montana's greatest and most influential judges.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kevin Rapkoch, RN, BSN
Tempe, Arizona
480-862-3720
kevrapkoch@gmail.com

Ryan P. Archibald
617 N. 5th St. Hamilton, MT 59840
(406) 698-4296 archibaldattorney@gmail.com

April 15, 2022

Governor Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 2000801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

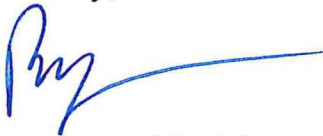
I am writing in support of Alisha Rapkoch for appointment to the Montana Twentieth District Court Judgeship. I have known Ms. Rapkoch for several years, both as a fellow attorney and as a manager. She exemplifies the qualities needed to be a judge, especially here in Montana.

Ms. Rapkoch is passionate about the justice system and has set the example for anyone that has had the opportunity to work with her. She is genuinely concerned with individual rights and has fought her entire career to protect them. She is also able to see both sides of any factual and legal issue. She practices law with empathy, not just for her clients, but for every party involved.

As a contract attorney with the Public Defender's Office, I knew I could come to her with any issues, and she would listen and provide sound advice for the resolution of that issue. I also had the pleasure working with Ms. Rapkoch while we both managed offices with Office of the State Public Defender on statewide legal issues. As the Hamilton City Court Judge, I knew I could reach out to Ms. Rapkoch about the attorneys appearing in my Court and she would work resolve any concerns. Her passion and knowledge of the law will helped provide great outcomes not just for individual clients, but for all Montanans.

Ms. Rapkoch has the integrity, legal knowledge, and empathy to be great a judge. More importantly she genuinely cares about the community and the people she serves.

Sincerely,



Ryan P. Archibald

To: Greg Gianforte and advisory council
Governor, State of Montana
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte and advisory council:

I am writing this letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch for District Court Judge in the Twentieth Judicial District. My name is Lindsey Jubain, I am an attorney with the Office of the State Public Defender and have been practicing law for ten years. I know Alisha's dedication and respected reputation as a lawyer, and I am confident she has all the qualities needed to serve as District Court Judge.

When Alisha first started at the Kalispell Public Defender Office, she was a new attorney. Her motivation and commitment to the legal practice has resulted in her becoming one of the most experienced criminal defense attorneys in Montana. I have observed Alisha as lead counsel during numerous jury trials, including homicides, I have attended legal educational trainings executed by her, read motions she has prepared, and continue to see what a capable and meticulous attorney she is. She keeps current with changes in the law and takes the time to research and understand judicial decisions which is essential for this position.

Alisha respects and protects the constitution. As judge, she would not rule with an agenda, nor as a criminal defense attorney, she would be impartial and uphold the constitution, applying the language and interpretation of the law. Alisha is a strong and confident woman who does not let the distraction of whispers or other inappropriate factors influence her decision making; she will make her decisions based off the facts and the law as applied to each case. She is not easily insulted and handles criticism well, welcoming all forms of feedback with a maturity and understanding that results in both growth and improvements to our legal system.

Alisha treats her clients, the victims, opposing counsel, coworkers, the profession, and the courtroom with dignity and care. She is a valued member in the legal community, and I have no doubt she would soon become one of the most respected judges in Montana.

District Court Judge is one of the most important positions in this State. Not only does the position need to be filled by someone competent, experienced, and fair but it is crucial the position be filled by someone, like Alisha, that is stable and has a high ethical and moral compass inside and outside of the courtroom. I trust Alisha Rapkoch and choosing her would be a win for the State of Montana, she has the character and work ethic to flourish in this position. I am available for further contact at lipilecki@hotmail.com, lindsey.jubain@mt.gov, 406-240-9172 (personal), or 406-751-6080 (work).

Respectfully,

/s/Lindsey Jubain

Noel K. Larrivee

P.O. Box 200
Dayton, MT 59914
Telephone: (406) 260-5693
E-Mail: NoelLarrivee@outlook.com

March 16, 2022

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

RE: In the Matter of the Judicial Application of Alisha Rapkoch
District Court Judge – Twentieth Judicial District

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

This correspondence is to serve as a letter of reference and recommendation of Alisha Rapkoch for the judicial vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District serving Lake and Sanders Counties. I recently retired after having been an attorney for 46 years in Montana. I have practiced in all levels of court throughout Montana, the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. I was the managing attorney in the Polson Public Defender Office since the inception of the agency in 2006. In Polson, I had the responsibility of not only managing the OPD staff attorneys, but also monitoring the conflict attorneys in Lake and Sanders County.

I have taught at the University of Montana School of Law and the University of Idaho College of Law. My tenure at the University of Idaho in Moscow spanned 38 years. Suffice to say, I have seen many judges throughout the years, and I have served as a judge pro tempore in Missoula. I have a keen appreciation of the qualities that a good judge should possess.

The first metric for measuring any judicial candidate is honesty and integrity. I have worked with Alisha Rapkoch in several capacities, including serving in a supervisory capacity to her for the Office of the State Public Defender in northwest Montana. Alisha epitomizes what every lawyer should strive for in terms of integrity and she is impeccably honest.

You want a judge who will listen, be firm and decisive, and have an excellent knowledge of the law gained from education and from experience. Alisha has those qualities. Being a patient listener can be a challenge at times, but Alisha knows the value of listening and hearing all sides before making a decision. Alisha is smart and identifies issues quickly, but weighs all arguments carefully.

Alisha's experience in a variety of legal matters makes her uniquely qualified for the bench. I have tried cases with Alisha and she has an exceptional grasp of the Rules of Evidence – an important skill for a sitting judge.

Gov. Greg Gianforte
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Just as important as her legal skills, is the fact that Alisha is caring, practical and down to earth. Judicial temperament is critical to the job and she will show just that in the courtroom. I have seen Alisha in a variety of roles: Supervisor, mentor to younger attorneys and advocate in the courtroom. Alisha has the acumen to carry on multiple tasks and get the job done in a timely manner.

One of the last cases I had working for OPD was serving as counsel with Alisha in a deliberate homicide case in Libby, Montana. There were volumes of materials generated in the case. Multiple motions researched, briefed and argued by Alisha. Alisha was able to see things that I was too immersed in to recognize. What was important to me at the time, and to this day, was the opportunity to sit down with Alisha and work through the challenges of the case and a difficult client. Alisha helped navigate the case to its conclusion.

Alisha understands the many challenges that people face today and will take an empathetic approach to addressing the needs of every litigant. Alisha has a quiet confidence, is a hard worker and she is very industrious.

Being a judge is not an easy job and Alisha understands the scale of the task -- I heartily endorse Alisha Rapkoch for the position for which she has applied without reservation. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter in more detail with you or other members of the selection committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Noel K. Larrivee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'N' and 'L'.

Noel K. Larrivee

Theresa L. Diekhans
415 W. Main St. #3
Lewistown, MT 59457
(406) 836-7655
tdiekhans@co.fergus.mt.us

March 17, 2022

RE: Letter of Support for Alisha Rapkoch

Dear Governor:

I am writing this letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch being appointed as the new Judge for the Twentieth Judicial District Court for Lake and Sanders Counties.

I have had the honor of working with Alisha since she started at the Office of Public Defenders office in 2016 and we met at boot camp training. I was instantly impressed with Alisha's passion for the law and her work ethic. My admiration has only been enhanced over the years of working with her. Alisha's dedication to the law and her clients is unparalleled. Her advocacy for her clients inspires those of us who work with her.

Alisha constantly strives to stay current on case law and statutory law. She sought additional training increasing her skills and knowledge and then shared what she learned with her colleagues. Alisha constantly strives to make herself a better attorney and better advocate. As a Judge she would continue to work to improve herself and her knowledge and would be an asset to the bench.

When Alisha accepted a leadership role, her staff and colleagues accepted and respected her as a leader. She listens, she guides, she supports, and she teaches. She is exactly who we want for a Judge. I say that having been a defense attorney and prosecuting attorney.

Alisha's respect and dedication for the law and justice is why she needs to be appointed to this position. She is just the lawyer we need on the bench.

Sincerely,

//s//

Theresa L. Diekhans

Slusser, Hannah

From: Preston Davis <prestonrobertdavis@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 18, 2022 10:13 AM
To: NominateJudges; Rapkoch, Alisha
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support - Alisha Rapkoch, Twentieth Judicial District

Governor Gianforte,

I'm writing to recommend Alisha Rapkoch for appointment as a District Court judge in the Twentieth Judicial District. It's an easy letter for me to write – Ms. Rapkoch will make an excellent judge. Over the past 18 months she has been my co-worker and supervisor at the Office of the Public Defender. She has consistently demonstrated the qualities I hope to see in our judges.

Ms. Rapkoch has boundless energy and has chosen to commit that energy to the pursuit of justice, both for her clients and the community. She can reliably be found at her office hours before sunrise and after sunset. She has taken on cases seven hours away from her home because she knows that she can achieve success where previous attorneys could not. I trust her to work as hard and as long as it takes to do it right. I trust her to bring that passion to the court.

Judges are managers, of a sort, and Ms. Rapkoch is a strong manager. She understands how to build a team mindset, how to support employees when they need it and how to set up processes that will help an office function effectively. On both a qualitative and quantitative level, our office improved dramatically during her tenure. I expect the same results in the Twentieth Judicial District.

Most importantly, I trust Ms. Rapkoch's judgement, legal and otherwise. Over the past five years, I have had the pleasure of working with almost all of the criminal defense attorneys in the Missoula area. Ms. Rapkoch is one of two lawyers that I regularly contact for advice and information. She is a reliable source for creative solutions and knowledge of obscure case law.

You can trust Alisha to commit her energy, wisdom and strong management skills to the court and I hope you will select her.

Thank you,

Preston Davis

March 25, 2022

Greg Gianforte
Governor, State of Montana
Office of the Governor
P.O. BOX 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I write to offer my emphatic support of Attorney Alisha Rapkoch as appointee for Montana's Twentieth District Court Judgeship, Lake and Sanders Counties. I have known and worked alongside Ms. Rapkoch since we began our work as Public Defenders for the State of Montana in 2015. Although we worked in different offices, in different regions, she has become a trusted colleague for whom I have the deepest respect. Ms. Rapkoch is an ally on the frontlines of criminal defense; her desire to fairly uphold the law and defend the constitution is central to her character.

Ms. Rapkoch is committed to the highest standard of ethical practice and would be an asset to Montana's Judicial Bar. Her approach to advocacy is rooted in equal access and application of justice. As an attorney she is well versed in the rules of procedure, courtroom decorum, and application of law. She has traveled thousands of miles to appear before courts across the State, earning and holding the trust of her clients and colleagues along the way.

One of my first interactions with Alisha was during her professional presentation on Voir Dire, early in her career. From the onset, she established herself as a leader by challenging her contemporaries to think critically about their engagement with Montanans what it meant to pursue the truth. From that point, Alisha gained incredible momentum and support for her holistic approach to defense; now, years from our first meeting, Alisha has since become one of Montana's most qualified criminal defense attorneys in the State.

Alisha lives and breathes the law. She is never offput by a midnight telephone call about a complex case or creative legal theory. Her integrity shines through her work, because at her core she is honest, unbiased, and bold. I admire her, and I am proud to know her in this capacity.

I confidently and enthusiastically recommend Attorney Alisha Rapkoch for Judicial Appointment. She would serve the communities of Lake and Sanders Counties well and honor the great state of Montana! Thank you for allowing me to share my perspective and opinion of Ms. Rapkoch's potential.

Sincerely,

Shannon Sweeney
Attorney at Law

Shannon@sweeneyesq.com
406-404-6541

Noel K. Larrivee

P.O. Box 200
Dayton, MT 59914
Telephone: (406) 260-5693
E-Mail: NoelLarrivee@outlook.com

April 18, 2022

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

RE: In the Matter of the Judicial Application of Alisha Rapkoch
District Court Judge – Twentieth Judicial District

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

This correspondence is to serve as a letter of reference and recommendation of Alisha Rapkoch for the judicial vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District serving Lake and Sanders Counties. I recently retired after having been an attorney for 46 years in Montana. I have practiced in all levels of court throughout Montana, the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. I was the managing attorney in the Polson Public Defender Office since the inception of the agency in 2006. In Polson, I had the responsibility of not only managing the OPD staff attorneys, but also monitoring the conflict attorneys in Lake and Sanders County.

I have taught at the University of Montana School of Law and the University of Idaho College of Law. My tenure at the University of Idaho in Moscow spanned 38 years. Suffice to say, I have seen many judges throughout the years, and I have served as a judge pro tempore in Missoula. I have a keen appreciation of the qualities that a good judge should possess.

The first metric for measuring any judicial candidate is honesty and integrity. I have worked with Alisha Rapkoch in several capacities, including serving in a supervisory capacity to her for the Office of the State Public Defender in northwest Montana. Alisha epitomizes what every lawyer should strive for in terms of integrity and she is impeccably honest.

You want a judge who will listen, be firm and decisive, and have an excellent knowledge of the law gained from education and from experience. Alisha has those qualities. Being a patient listener can be a challenge at times, but Alisha knows the value of listening and hearing all sides before making a decision. Alisha is smart and identifies issues quickly, but weighs all arguments carefully.

Alisha's experience in a variety of legal matters makes her uniquely qualified for the bench. I have tried cases with Alisha and she has an exceptional grasp of the Rules of Evidence – an important skill for a sitting judge.

Gov. Greg Gianforte
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April 18, 2022

Just as important as her legal skills is the fact that Alisha is caring, practical and down to earth. Judicial temperament is critical to the job and she will show just that in the courtroom. I have seen Alisha in a variety of roles: Supervisor, mentor to younger attorneys and advocate in the courtroom. Alisha has the acumen to carry on multiple tasks and get the job done in a timely manner.

One of the last cases I had working for OPD was serving as counsel with Alisha in a deliberate homicide case in Libby, Montana. There were volumes of materials generated in the case. Multiple motions researched, briefed and argued by Alisha. Alisha was able to see things that I was too immersed in to recognize. What was important to me at the time, and to this day, was the opportunity to sit down with Alisha and work through the challenges of the case and a difficult client. Alisha helped navigate the case to its conclusion.

Alisha understands the many challenges that people face today and will take an empathetic approach to addressing the needs of every litigant. Alisha has a quiet confidence, is a hard worker and she is very industrious.

I have had the opportunity to review the work product of the other applicants for this position. I can state unequivocally that Alisha is the most qualified candidate for this judgeship. She has the legal skills, training, experience and demeanor to serve as judge. Her ethics are above reproach. Comparing the disciplinary records of the individual candidates is critical to selecting the best person for this important position.

Being a judge is not an easy job and Alisha understands the scale of the task -- I heartily endorse Alisha Rapkoch for the position for which she has applied without reservation. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter in more detail with you or other members of the selection committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Noel K. Larrivee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Noel K. Larrivee

Dianne Rice
Office of State Public Defender
Public Defender Division
723 5th Ave. East, Suite 100
Kalispell, MT 59901
Phone: (406) 751-6080

April 7, 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing in support of Alisha Rapkoch's bid to fill District Court Judge James Manley's position in the Twentieth Judicial District Court. I believe Alisha is the right person for this position for many reasons. First, Alisha knows the law and has a profound respect for it. She has a strong motions practice and routinely turns to the law to help her clients. She has been the speaker at the annual conferences and often gives presentations at our weekly meetings to explain new areas of the law that she has helped develop. I turn to Alisha when I have legal questions. I believe that attorneys practicing in front of her will be confident that the law will prevail.

While working with Alisha, I have seen her demonstrate her ability to excel in extremely stressful situations. She has a good head on her shoulders. She is professional with her clients, witnesses against them, opposing counsel, judges, staff, coworkers - any person I have seen her interact with. She has gone to trial on the most difficult cases and shown herself to maintain composure and calm throughout. She also often gets assigned to represent the most difficult clients because she has an unmatched ability to garner the trust and confidence of people who don't trust anyone else.

Alisha, also, genuinely cares. She cares about the profession and people in general. She is a good person. Every year she organizes a Christmas gift drive for a local youth home. She makes sure that kids who would otherwise go without have coats and backpacks and things they like and need. She also sends Christmas cards to everyone in jail over the holidays to add cheer during what can be a very painful time in their lives. I have faith that the community I grew up in, which currently includes my immediate family, would benefit from having a woman like Alisha preside over their legal challenges. I hope you can see that too.

Sincerely,

Dianne Rice

Dianne Rice
Office of State Public Defender
Public Defender Division
723 5th Ave. East, Suite 100
Kalispell, MT 59901
Phone: (406) 751-6080

April 7, 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte,

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Sincerely,

Dianne Rice

April 23, 2022

James Reavis
P.O. Box 22301
Billings, MT 59104

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing this letter in strong support of Alisha Rapkoch to serve as the next district court judge for Lake and Sanders counties.

Alisha is passionate about public service. She is great at networking and learning about people's concerns and needs. I know this because she reached out to me many years ago on LinkedIn, seeking connections for living and working in Montana as an attorney. Even from the beginning I could tell see Alisha's strong work ethic and her keen sense of fixing the wrongs in our justice system.

Alisha and I are both public defenders. Even though we never worked in the same office, Alisha's name came up frequently as a skilled attorney who was not afraid to take cases to trial. As a judge, Alisha will never be someone to browbeat litigants into settling or taking a plea deal. She will ensure that everyone's constitutional right to go to trial will be protected or that any settlements that avoid a trial will be handled fairly.

An often-overlooked quality to being a good judge is the ability to run and manage the workflow of a courtroom. Alisha became the managing attorney of a brand-new public defender office in late 2020. Alisha built up a staff from scratch and used her organizational skills to juggle caseload assignments and attorney placements across dozens of courts in Western Montana. Alisha will be able to use these skills to properly manage a courtroom as caseloads continue to increase.

Alisha will also make an excellent judge because she will be able to act competently under pressure and tight deadlines. In *State v. Rossbach*, Alisha jumped into the case for Mr. Rossbach's second trial after his previous lawyers had been unfairly removed from the case. Alisha had a very short window to prepare for trial and was just coming out of foot surgery to boot. I handled Mr. Rossbach's appeal and I read a trial transcript that showed Alisha being in full command of the courtroom and arguing passionately for her client. Mr. Rossbach received a zealous defense, and the Montana Supreme Court noted Alisha's "thorough trial preparation," a rare comment from the Court to give to a specific attorney. I urge you to select Alisha Rapkoch for district court judge.

Sincerely,
James Reavis

Ryan Hennen
Office of State Public Defender
Public Defender Division
723 5th Ave. East, Suite 100
Kalispell, MT 59901
Phone: (406) 751-6080

April 19, 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte:

My name is Ryan Hennen and I write this letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch's request to fill District Court Judge James Manley's position in the Twentieth Judicial District Court. I am currently employed by the Office of the State Public Defender in Kalispell, Montana.

Mrs. Rapkoch has an exemplary understanding of the law. Her motions practice, trial skills, and understanding of legal procedure are unmatched. The attorneys in our agency have been fortunate to have Mrs. Rapkoch as a speaker and presenter at our annual training conference where Mrs. Rapkoch is able to explain the nuances of complex legal issues and developments within the law in easy-to-understand terms. An attorney practicing in front of Mrs. Rapkoch can be confident that solid legal reasoning, as opposed to emotion or ideals, will prevail.

As a young lawyer, I had the privilege to sit second chair with Mrs. Rapkoch on numerous cases tried in front of a jury. It did not take long for me to come to the realization that I had a lot to learn if I wanted to be an effective trial lawyer. Her ability to think on her feet in high pressure situations and an encyclopedic like knowledge of the rules of evidence have allowed her to rise to one of the best trial lawyers in the agency. In a job fraught with stress and injustice, I have never once seen Mrs. Rapkoch lose her composure. Even in the most difficult of circumstances, Mrs. Rapkoch remains professional with her clients, opposing counsel, judges, and coworkers.

Mrs. Rapkoch would be a boon to the judicial bar in the State of Montana. In addition to being an exceptional lawyer, she is deeply committed to holding the legal profession to the highest of standards and giving back to her community. Not a holiday season goes by without Mrs. Rapkoch organizing charitable efforts for the less fortunate in our society so they can feel a little less alone. Were I ever in the untenable situation of being forced to defend myself against criminal charges, I would feel at ease knowing that I was represented by someone with the legal acumen of Mrs. Rapkoch. I sincerely hope that

Mrs. Rapkoch is selected to the next District Court Judge of the Twentieth Judicial District Court.

Sincerely,

Ryan Hennen

From: alawrencelaw@gmail.com
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter of Support for Alisha Rapkoch
Date: Thursday, April 21, 2022 1:11:34 PM

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I am writing in whole-hearted support of Alisha Backus Rapkoch for appointment as the Montana Twentieth Judicial District Court Judge, in and for Lake and Sanders Counties.

I have had the unique opportunity of knowing Alisha from both my time as a Deputy County Attorney at the Flathead County Attorney's Office, and as a Public Defender in Region 1, Kalispell. I have never known a harder worker nor someone so devoted to justice for the indigent. Alisha went from intern to line attorney and almost immediately, she was trying serious felony cases and achieving excellent results for her clients. Well within her first five years as a Public Defender, she was trying Homicides as first chair, and she is one of very few attorneys in the state to become capital case certified.

Not only is Alisha a zealous and tireless advocate for her clients in the Courtroom and in her Motions practice, she is also an inspiration for her efforts outside of Court, including hosting an annual Christmas party for disadvantaged youth here in Kalispell, and sending hundreds of Christmas cards to inmates who might not receive any other cheer.

Alisha is brilliant and dedicated, but she is also kind, compassionate, even-tempered and family-focused, attributes I most appreciate in a Judge. She has served this state well and would continue to do so as a District Court Judge, and therefore I urge you to strongly consider her for judicial appointment.

Respectfully,

Anne Lawrence

Attorney at Law PLLC

PO Box 792

Columbia Falls, MT 59912

(406) 897-2363

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NICK AEMISEGGER, JR.
ATTORNEY AT LAW

1970 Four Mile Drive
Kalispell, Montana 59901
Email • nickinmt@gmail.com
406-270-0554

April 24, 2022

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

Re: Letter of Support for Alisha Rapkoch

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

It is my honor and pleasure to write a letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch's candidacy for the soon-to-be-vacated position of state district judge in the Twentieth Judicial District.

I have been with the Office of State Public Defender (OSPD) since its inception in 2006. The vast majority of my career as a public defender has been spent in management. I am currently responsible for managing full-time public defender services in Flathead and Lincoln Counties.

I had the pleasure of hiring Ms. Rapkoch as a full-time public defender in 2015. In her first year of practice, she achieved the honor of receiving the "Public Defender of the Year" award. To my knowledge, she is the only attorney in OSPD's history to receive this award in her first year of practice.

Ms. Rapkoch's meteoric start as a public defender is emblematic of her approach to the practice of law. Early in her career, Ms. Rapkoch was granted scholarships to attend over four weeks of intense training at the Gerry Spence Trial Lawyer's College. In addition to incorporating the techniques she learned into her trial practice, Ms. Rapkoch shared what she learned with attorneys in our office and throughout Montana. She even leveraged her connections at the Trial Lawyer's College to provide trial skills training to over 40 Montana public defenders at a deep discount.

Ms. Rapkoch is also committed to finding creative ways to effectively manage the increasing number of individuals who are entering the criminal justice system as a result of mental illness and addiction. She is a strong advocate of utilizing drug courts, as well as social workers and other mental health professionals, to prevent people who can be safely and effectively treated in the community from entering the criminal justice system.

Ms. Rapkoch is the kind of person who is committed to making herself – and those around her – the very best at what they do. For those of us committed to public defense, that means protecting the cherished rights we are all guaranteed under the Montana and U.S. Constitutions by providing a voice to those who are least able to mount a defense. Ms. Rapkoch has effectively

Gov. Greg Gianforte

Page Two

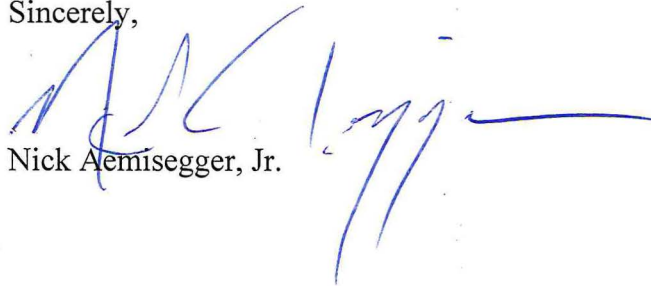
April 24, 2022

provided a voice to mothers at risk of losing their children, fathers at risk of involuntary commitment to the Montana State Hospital, grandparents facing an unwelcome guardianship petition, and even an accused at risk of losing his very life at the hands of the State. In discharging her duties, Ms. Rapkoch has provided passionate and effective advocacy while maintaining her obligation of professionalism to the courts and dignity to her clients.

With remarkable speed, Ms. Rapkoch has emerged as one of the most proficient trial attorneys in Montana. If given the opportunity, I have no doubt she will achieve the same level of success as a district court judge. Ms. Rapkoch truly is a cut above. I can think of no better candidate for the position of state district judge in the Twentieth Judicial District, and I have no hesitation in giving her my highest recommendation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nick Aemisegger, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nick Aemisegger, Jr.

From: [Paul Lamb](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Cc: Lisha386@gmail.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Alisha Rabkoch
Date: Monday, April 25, 2022 10:20:38 PM

To whom it may concern,

I would like to submit my support for Alisha Rabkoch for the judicial vacancy in Lake and Sanders county. I have known her for over two years and she has always been fair and compassionate in dealing with people involved in the Judicial process. Her knowledge of the legal statutes is impressive. She is always willing to go the extra measure to help insure that justice is fairly served.

Respectfully submitted, Paul Lamb



P.O. Box 575
Victor, Mt. 59875
406-363-7277

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing this letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch being appointed as the new Judge for the Twentieth Judicial District Court for Lake and Sanders Counties.

I am sending this letter of support from the perspective of a lifelong Montana resident; retired Undersheriff (Ravalli County); Former Adult Probation and Parole Officer; family man, Private Investigator and a strong believer in law, justice, and fairness.

During the time I have known Alisha she has displayed the leadership qualities that I believe are necessary to be a District Court Judge. She displays quiet (yet obvious) confidence, as well as uncommon intelligence and passion for the law and for people in general. She is not afraid of the “noise” that all too common accompanies high profile court cases. She is not the sort to not cave into political pressure in her decision making, always with an eye toward following the law, being fair and making appropriate-informed decisions.

If you select Alishia Rapkoch for this appointment to District Court Judge, her knowledge, character, and integrity will serve Montana well.

Sincerely,

William J. “Bill” Buzzell

Moses Okeyo
6026 S. Verde St.,
Tacoma, WA 98409
208-241-8194

April 25, 2022

Governor's Office
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801
nominatejudges@mt.gov

Dear Governor Greg Gianforte and Members of the Commission,

I am writing to enthusiastically support Alisha Rapkoch's application for the 20th District Court Judicial vacancy. I strongly believe that Ms. Rapkoch has demonstrated a commitment to pro bono advocacy, serving the indigent, promoting access to justice to all citizens. Her excellent and enduring public service make her an ideal candidate.

I have worked alongside Ms. Rapkoch at the Montana Office of the Public Defender (OPD) for seven years. Over those years, I have witnessed her ability as an attorney. I have found that she is intelligent, knows the law, is hard working, and maintains a high ethical standard. She was consistent and dedicated to serving those who are unable to afford legal representation—even spending significant amounts of her time, money, and energy to help those clients. It was this dedication and commitment that saw her rise through OPD's ranks to managing attorney. Those same characteristics have carried over throughout her career. Ms. Rapkoch will undoubtedly bring the same dedication, thoughtfulness, and consistency as a judge—her qualifications are clear.

Most of all, I believe that our judges must be committed to equal access to justice and to the provision of legal services to low-income and poor individuals in our community. Ms. Rapkoch's consistent, long-standing dedication to providing exceptional legal services to the indigent and her acts of public service are evident through her many years of participation in pro bono work, and the several position she has held at OPD. I believe Ms. Rapkoch has exhibited excellent judicial temperament. Apart from her keen legal mind, she has a proven track record of handling numerous complicated legal issues. I have no doubt she will provide just and unbiased legal decisions. Thus, I heartily support Ms. Rapkoch's candidacy for judgeship.

Respectfully submitted,



Moses Okeyo

From: [Johnson, Josephine](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 20th Judicial District Court Judge Vacancy- Letter of Support for Alisha Rapkoch
Date: Wednesday, April 27, 2022 11:47:44 AM

To Governor Gianforte, the advisory council, and any others whom it may concern:

My name is Josephine Johnson, and I am writing to express my support for Alisha Rapkoch as a candidate for the 20th Judicial District Court judge vacancy.

I am a citizen of Montana and a student at the School of Social Work at the University of Montana. As a social worker, I am dedicated to the pursuit of social justice in our Montana communities. Montana's criminal justice practices have long been detrimental to many of our most vulnerable citizens and communities, including those who are BIPOC, low-income, and experiencing mental illness. I believe one avenue to increase justice in our court systems is to appoint judges-- who have great power to influence court proceeding and decide the severity of convicted individuals' sentences-- with diverse backgrounds in law practice and especially who have served and worked with these vulnerable populations. Montana does not have a strong history of appointing public defenders to judgeship positions, but I believe that should change.

Alisha Rapkoch's career as a public defender in the state of Montana has demonstrated skill and passion for the work. She has worked both as an attorney and administrator within the Office of the Public Defender. She is one of only a few female criminal defense attorneys in Montana's history who is certified to try death penalty cases, and she has tried a number of high-profile cases with poise and dedication to the work.

I believe her intelligence, experience, compassion, and dedication to justice would make her an excellent judge capable of honoring and serving all Montanans who may pass through her courtroom. I hope you strongly consider the unique skillset and perspective that she would bring to the table as the only applicant with strong background in public defense.

Sincerely,

Josephine Johnson
University of Montana, School of Social Work

From: [LISA KAUFFMAN](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Cc: [LISA KAUFFMAN](#); Lisha386@gmail.com
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 20th Judicial Vacancy in Lake/Sanders County- Re: candidate Alisha Rapkoch
Date: Thursday, April 28, 2022 1:28:14 PM

Dear Governor Gianforte:

In a field of experienced and passionate attorneys, how do you select the best candidate to be a Judge? As a previous prosecutor in Chicago and a public defender in Montana for 35 years, I have practiced before, argued with, and grown impatient and frustrated with many Judges. In 2020-2021, I was a contract attorney for OPD, supervised by Alisha. The qualities that lend themselves to a “good” Judge are exactly the qualities that Alisha presents.

1. Fair- the ability to not just see, but understand both sides and render a fair decision as in: attorney/client disputes, personnel challenges, and mgt./staff issues.
2. Resilience- to weather the stress and pressures of wearing many hats as both a line attorney and manager while remaining unflappable.
3. Keen intellect- to turn to the law and spend time dissecting it to reach comprehensive conclusions
4. Back Bone - to make a decision and stand by it
5. Patience- to allow for opposing views and accommodate dissension with an eye towards resolution

I hope you will strongly consider Alisha for appointment.

Thank you

Lisa B. Kauffman
Attorney at Law
1234 S. 5th St West
Missoula, Montana 59801
406-544-1903

Dear Judicial Selection Committee:

I am honored to provide a letter of recommendation for Mrs. Alisha Rapkoch to serve as a District Court Judge. With close to 23 years' experience, I have made countless appearances in various Montana District Courts. I also have worked closely with Mrs. Rapkoch for around eight years. She is both an amazingly talented trial lawyer and an excellent person. We need more Montana Judges like Mrs. Rapkoch.

I met Mrs. Rapkoch when she first volunteered for Region 1, of the State Office of the Public Defender. Her legal brilliance was immediately apparent. She initially helped with research and writing assignments. We were very fortunate to take her on as a full-time lawyer as soon as a position for her became available. I was honored to be asked to help mentor Mrs. Rapkoch. Honestly, the easiest thing I was asked to do.

I remember being truly stunned as I watched her for the first time trialing a criminal case to a jury. Her composure was that of an attorney with at least 10 years of trial experience. Amazingly, her trial skills continued to improve as she tried more and more jury trials. Mrs. Rapkoch has now tried multiple complex homicides. Her abilities in a courtroom are impressive.

Mrs. Rapkoch also has extensive training experience. She started by doing CLE for the Office of the Public Defender on various aspects of jury trials and criminal cases. She then took on a monthly training for Region 1 attorneys on handling serious criminal cases. She also tackled the Region A Conflict Division manager position. Like everything I have witnessed her do, she did an exceptional job.

Lastly, Mrs. Rapkoch is a truly good person. She is always volunteering to help children in the youth court system. Buy Christmas presents and hosting holiday parties for them. She also started writing Christmas cards to her client who had to spend Christmas in jail. Year after year this grew to the point, she was giving Christmas cards to every inmate in Lincoln, Flathead and Lake County jails. Alisha is a brilliant legal researcher, amazing trial lawyer, and a beautiful person. I am honored to know her.

Sincerely,

William L. Managhan

Bar No. 5185

Emily K. Lamson
PO Box 831 Whitefish, MT 59937
(406)697-6283 emilykjudd@gmail.com

April 25, 2022

Governor Gianforte
Office of the Governor
PO Box 2000801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing on behalf of Ms. Alisha Rapkoch for appointment to the Montana Twentieth District Court Judgeship. I have known and worked with Alisha for 6 years and I cannot think of a more qualified applicant to serve as Judge in Twentieth Judicial District.

Alisha and I have worked together at the Office of the Public Defender in Kalispell and have tried a homicide together. I have had the opportunity to watch her in trial and read her briefs as well as attend legal trainings she has put on. She displays a rare knowledge and understanding of the law. She stays up to date with the changes in law and current legal trends from other jurisdictions. Alisha is always willing to talk about a case and share what she has learned through research and experience. She has taken cases all over the state and as a wide array of experience.

Not only does Alisha possess the legal knowledge required, but she also has a genuine concern for her clients and the community. Every Christmas she has organized a present drive and party for the local youth shelter and writes inmates Christmas cards. She has taken the time out of her busy schedule to talk to high school classes about the different aspects of practicing law.

Watching her in the courtroom, it is clear she has calm and competent manner that would be a welcome addition to any bench. She also treats everyone – opposing counsel, clients and judges with respect. Alisha takes the time to truly listen to her clients and allow them to be heard.

Alisha shows a true devotion to her job and clients. Often working weekends and late nights to prepare for a case or even to help a client. While she advocates tirelessly for her clients, I can confidently say that she would not take the bench with an agenda. She takes the time to understand both sides before making a decision and will work tirelessly to uphold the Constitution.

Thank you for your time to consider Alisha. Please do not hesitate to reach out with further questions.

/S/ Emily K. Lamson

GLEN NEIER
Attorney at Law
P.O Box 3233
Kalispell, MT 59901
Tele: (406) 261-5572
glenneier@centurylink.net

April 27, 2022

Judicial Nominations Commission
Office of Court Administrator
P.O. Box 203005
Helena, MT 59620-203005

RE: Alisha Rapkoch:

Dear People:

I write this letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch's appointment as District Court Judge in the Twentieth Judicial District, encompassing Lake and Sanders County.

I have practiced law in Montana for approximately 46 years, the last twenty primarily devoted to criminal defense. Prior to my "defense" career I served as Assistant County Attorney in Meagher County from 1976 through 1981 and City Attorney for the City of Kalispell from 1982 through 2001. I have appeared before numerous District Courts in Montana during my career and observed many District Court Judges. I believe my experience entitles me to give my opinion as to Ms. Rapkoch's qualifications as a candidate for District Judge in the Twentieth Judicial District.

I have known Ms. Rapkoch for about seven years, since she became an attorney with the Office of Public Defender in Kalispell. Ms. Rapkoch possesses the admirable characteristics of being a student of the law together with an unabiding tenacity in representing individuals before District Courts in Montana. I know of no one who possesses a greater work ethic and she is constantly striving to increase her knowledge of the law.

Alisha has the ability and temperament to analyze the issues and controversies presented and render decisions that are articulate and well-reasoned. If appointed Alisha would be an asset to the delivery of justice in Lake and Sanders County.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me as noted above.

Sincerely,


Glen Neier
Attorney

April 26, 2022

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Judicial Nomination Advisory Council
Sent via email: nominatejudges@mt.gov

Re: Alisha Rapkoch

Dear Council Members:

I write to recommend Ms. Alisha Rapkoch for consideration as the Twentieth Judicial District Court Judge. I had the opportunity to work alongside Ms. Rapkoch while she was the managing attorney for the Missoula Office of Public Defender, and it is my pleasure to write a letter in support of her candidacy.

I own a small private practice in Missoula, MT and regularly represent parents, children, and tribes in Dependency and Neglect cases across the state, as well as at the Montana Supreme Court. I have worked with a number of managing attorneys from the Office of Public Defender, but Ms. Rapkoch stands out as particularly exemplary. Ms. Rapkoch demonstrated a commitment to excellence, in both her own legal work and her management of attorneys in the field.

Ms. Rapkoch is a sharp legal mind, who does not stop pursuing the answer, even when the analysis is difficult. If I had to pick a word to describe her approach to the practice of law, I would select “inquisitive.” Ms. Rapkoch thoroughly researches and analyzes legal issues, asks probing questions, and scrutinizes each case. She is not easily intimidated, by either confusing legal questions or particularly strong personalities. In short, she possesses the type of toughness, both in mind and demeanor, which will suit her well to the bench.

In addition to her legal acumen, Ms. Rapkoch is an exceptionally kind and professional person. She understands the importance of family, an important skill for a jurist with a heavy family-law and Dependency and Neglect docket. She has demonstrated keen insight into issues facing our communities, including poverty, substance use, and mental illness. Her compassionate and professional demeanor will be an asset to her community if she is selected for the position of state district



court judge. I strongly endorse Alisha Rapkoch for the position and welcome the opportunity to discuss her candidacy in more detail with you or members of this nomination council.

Sincerely,

Kelly Driscoll

Kelly M. Driscoll



Noel K. Larrivee

REC'D APR 21

P.O. Box 200
Dayton, MT 59914
Telephone: (406) 260-5693
E-Mail: NoelLarrivee@outlook.com

April 18, 2022

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620-0801

RE: In the Matter of the Judicial Application of Alisha Rapkoch
District Court Judge – Twentieth Judicial District

Dear Gov. Gianforte:

This correspondence is to serve as a letter of reference and recommendation of Alisha Rapkoch for the judicial vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District serving Lake and Sanders Counties. I recently retired after having been an attorney for 46 years in Montana. I have practiced in all levels of court throughout Montana, the Ninth Circuit and the U.S. Supreme Court. I was the managing attorney in the Polson Public Defender Office since the inception of the agency in 2006. In Polson, I had the responsibility of not only managing the OPD staff attorneys, but also monitoring the conflict attorneys in Lake and Sanders County.

I have taught at the University of Montana School of Law and the University of Idaho College of Law. My tenure at the University of Idaho in Moscow spanned 38 years. Suffice to say, I have seen many judges throughout the years, and I have served as a judge pro tempore in Missoula. I have a keen appreciation of the qualities that a good judge should possess.

The first metric for measuring any judicial candidate is honesty and integrity. I have worked with Alisha Rapkoch in several capacities, including serving in a supervisory capacity to her for the Office of the State Public Defender in northwest Montana. Alisha epitomizes what every lawyer should strive for in terms of integrity and she is impeccably honest.

You want a judge who will listen, be firm and decisive, and have an excellent knowledge of the law gained from education and from experience. Alisha has those qualities. Being a patient listener can be a challenge at times, but Alisha knows the value of listening and hearing all sides before making a decision. Alisha is smart and identifies issues quickly, but weighs all arguments carefully.

Alisha's experience in a variety of legal matters makes her uniquely qualified for the bench. I have tried cases with Alisha and she has an exceptional grasp of the Rules of Evidence – an important skill for a sitting judge.

Gov. Greg Gianforte
Page Two
April 18, 2022

Just as important as her legal skills is the fact that Alisha is caring, practical and down to earth. Judicial temperament is critical to the job and she will show just that in the courtroom. I have seen Alisha in a variety of roles: Supervisor, mentor to younger attorneys and advocate in the courtroom. Alisha has the acumen to carry on multiple tasks and get the job done in a timely manner.

One of the last cases I had working for OPD was serving as counsel with Alisha in a deliberate homicide case in Libby, Montana. There were volumes of materials generated in the case. Multiple motions researched, briefed and argued by Alisha. Alisha was able to see things that I was too immersed in to recognize. What was important to me at the time, and to this day, was the opportunity to sit down with Alisha and work through the challenges of the case and a difficult client. Alisha helped navigate the case to its conclusion.

Alisha understands the many challenges that people face today and will take an empathetic approach to addressing the needs of every litigant. Alisha has a quiet confidence, is a hard worker and she is very industrious.

I have had the opportunity to review the work product of the other applicants for this position. I can state unequivocally that Alisha is the most qualified candidate for this judgeship. She has the legal skills, training, experience and demeanor to serve as judge. Her ethics are above reproach. Comparing the disciplinary records of the individual candidates is critical to selecting the best person for this important position.

Being a judge is not an easy job and Alisha understands the scale of the task -- I heartily endorse Alisha Rapkoch for the position for which she has applied without reservation. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter in more detail with you or other members of the selection committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Noel K. Larrivee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Noel K. Larrivee

From: [Langston, Stormy](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: Reference Letter for Alisha Rapkoch
Date: Wednesday, April 27, 2022 8:58:12 PM

Dear Governor Gianforte,

Very soon you will be faced with the task of appointing a replacement for the Judicial seat that is being vacated by Judge Manley in the Twentieth Judicial District Court. In making this appointment, it is imperative that the appointee have the characteristics that make a good judge. These characteristics include, judicial temperament, courage, integrity, the ability to listen and communicate and be of high moral character.

One of the applicants for this position stands out to me as possessing all these qualities: Alisha Rapkoch.

I have known Ms. Rapkoch since 2015. Over the last seven years, I have had the privilege of witnessing Ms. Rapkoch transform from the intern that first appeared in my courtroom to the extremely capable and enthusiastic attorney that she is today. It is just a natural progression that she be appointed to the District Court Judge position.

Ms. Rapkoch is a breath of fresh air in the court room. She is patient, punctual, full of compassion, humility and above all common sense. There is no doubt that she loves the law and is passionate about making sure that the rights of all involved are protected. This is not an easy task. Ms. Rapkoch has illustrated the ability to communicate with all parties involved in a case in a calm and courteous manner. She continually shows a willingness to listen and consider what is being said on any debatable position. This is just the temperament needed in a District Court Judge.

Ms. Rapkoch has exemplified great courage and integrity during her career. She is not afraid to do what the law requires, even though it may not be popular with others involved in the system or the public in general. This speaks of the integrity that Ms. Rapkoch possesses.

A judge must be willing and able to continue pursuing their education, honing on their knowledge and skills. Ms. Rapkoch has demonstrated this characteristic. In fact, she has gone beyond in acquiring knowledge that furthers her ability to competently represent her clients and ensure the law is followed, and rights are not violated. Additionally, she has shared this information with other attorneys in hopes that it will assist them as well. There is no reason to believe that Ms. Rapkoch will not continue to pursue additional education to assist her in being the best judge that

she can be.

Ms. Rapkoch is the most well-rounded applicant for the appointment to the Twentieth Judicial District Court and it is with great confidence that I recommend her for this appointment. She will unquestionably bring, promote, and maintain confidence in the Montana Judiciary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stormy Langston", is positioned above a horizontal line. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stormy Langston
Eureka City Judge

April 29, 2022

Greg Gianforte
Governor, State of Montana
Office of the Governor
P.O. BOX 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I am writing in support of Attorney Alisha Rapkoch as appointee for Montana's Twentieth District Court Judgeship, Lake and Sanders Counties. I am Alisha's sister-in-law and neighbor, and I have witnessed firsthand the care and dedication with which Alisha approaches her roles as a family member, as a community participant, and as an attorney.

Alisha exemplifies strong family values, a core component of the "Montana Way." Alisha not only shares a last name with the late Honorable Peter L. Rapkoch, a judge who served for many years in central Montana, she also shares those central Montana family values. When I was diagnosed with leukemia during fall of 2021, Alisha quickly offered to help care for my young son while I sought treatment in Seattle. Despite a busy work schedule as the Managing Attorney for the Public Defender's Conflict Office in Missoula, she took on dance lessons, school assignments, and weekend outings with a deft and compassionate hand. She even partnered to establish "Milkshake Mondays" - a fun family tradition that brought a spark of joy to my young son's life.

Alisha stands tall as a steward of her community. Within months of relocating to Montana several years ago, Alisha spearheaded a fundraiser for the Flathead Youth Home, successfully wrangling several family members into volunteering - some of whom were on vacation! That's just Alisha. She serves her community in dynamic, empathetic ways. She has generously offered legal services on a pro bono basis. For example, she organized a legal aid clinic at Partnership Health in Missoula, providing free legal consultation to those in need.

Alisha approaches her role as attorney in the Office of the Public Defender with empathy and a strong work ethic. She treats her clients with the upmost dignity, while also showing respect to the law and the court. I have accompanied her to local stores while she bought clothes for her clients to wear to court, with her own funds. Every year, Alisha sends Christmas cards to the inmates in the local jail. She collaborated with educators in Missoula to ensure that juvenile clients awaiting trial were receiving high-quality education, as required by the Montana State Constitution for all youth in the state.

The ripple effects of Alisha's actions make real differences in real lives. It is my contention that she holds the necessary qualities to be an esteemed judge - a mix of compassion, perception, and knowledge that will aid her in making decisions that better the individual, the community, and the legal system.

Sincerely,

Patricia Johnson



ROBIN AMMONS

Attorney at Law, PLLC 415 KEITH AVENUE – MISSOULA, MT 59801 – CELL (406) 396-5974

April 29, 2022

Governor Gianforte
Office of the Governor
PO Box 2000801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I'm writing in support of Alisha Rapkoch for the position of District Court Judge in Lake/Sanders County 20th Judicial District.

During the 20 years that I have practiced law, a lot of my work has come from the conflict office of the Office of State Public Defender. Recently Alisha was the Managing Attorney of the Conflict Division Region A for the OPD.

When Alisha took this position in January 2021, right from the start she was a professional and enthusiastic problem-solver; someone who really enjoyed practicing law.

I'm sure other people in their letters will describe her outstanding legal and professional abilities. I'd like to focus on subtler things that I think represent the qualities that would make her an excellent judge.

She took over a situation with difficulties and overload. She stepped in and actively recruited attorneys, was respectful of their work loads, improved resources, offered training and assistance for DN, DJ, DI and criminal matters. She worked as hard or harder than anybody.

Alisha had come from the Flathead Office of Public Defender. Over the years, I've visited that office for different reasons, even though I mainly work in Missoula. In my experience they were always very available and helpful. I'm sure Alisha is one of the reasons for this, and also a reason why that office has a reputation as a supportive and stable working environment.

While she was Managing Attorney, she encouraged volunteer work among the attorneys, which for some may have been a stretch since in general a full load of OPD cases is already strenuous. It was a small thing but it stood out to me because it showed her compassion and commitment, and it worked. The specific volunteer situation had attorneys partnering with other agencies that served low-income people for an afternoon of free legal consultations. I joined in the volunteer project and quite a few people came needing help. Across the group we were able to help nearly all of them, and I had a great time because of Alisha's enthusiasm and organization.

The project took place outside of any legal setting. In the beginning of the session many different professionals were together in the open space of one large room. Over the

microphone, she introduced the project and reminded the attorneys of our ethical duty of confidentiality. It was a great reminder in an unusual setting. We were helping people who couldn't afford legal advice and were being reminded we were stewards for the rights we all have.

We went around the room to introduce all the different professionals, and everyone who was at all connected to the Conflict Office called Alisha their "boss". That was spontaneous, and it happened because she's a great leader and we were acknowledging her capabilities in a public setting.

Alisha is competent and compassionate, and I look forward to the day she makes legal decisions as a judge because of her outstanding qualifications and character.

Sincerely,



Robin Ammons

LIEBECK | LAW, APC

April 29, 2022

Governor Greg Gianforte
Governor's Office
PO Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Appointment of Alisha Rapkoch to the Twentieth Judicial District

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I write you in support of the appointment of Alisha Rapkoch to the Twentieth Judicial District (Lake and Sanders Counties). I have known and worked with Ms. Rapkoch in her capacity as an attorney at the Montana Public Defender's Office for the better part of six years, consulting with her on cases running the gamut from drugs to domestic abuse to kidnapping to murder.

My area of specialty deals with the intersection of law and medicine, which is often an exceptionally complex subject matter. I have been repeatedly impressed by how quickly Ms. Rapkoch can grasp and master those issues and have found her command of the Montana criminal code and rules of procedure to be equally impressive. In sum, it has been my experience that her understanding of the law and ability to apply it to complex issues greatly exceeds that of most attorneys.

My experience has further shown her to be unwilling to compromise when it comes to seeing justice done. She is easily among the most diligent and fearless advocates for their clients I've ever worked with. Moreover, her motivations are absolutely selfless. Her efforts are never about advancing herself personally or burnishing her name, but instead always about her responsibilities to her client and to the court.

Critically for a judge, Ms. Rapkoch is a person who would bring no political agenda or designs on personal advancement with her to the bench. As in her practice as a lawyer, she would be there for the sole purpose of ensuring the law was interpreted accurately and applied fairly to all parties, without regard to their status in society.

I sincerely endorse Ms. Rapkoch for the position of District Court Judge for the Twentieth Judicial District (Lake and Sanders Counties) and encourage your office to appoint her to the position.

Very truly yours,

LIEBECK | LAW, APC



KEVIN G. LIEBECK

To Whom it may Concern:

My name is Andrew Jenks, and I am writing this letter in support of the nomination for Alisha Rapkoch for Lake/Sanders County District Court Judge. Ms. Rapkoch was the managing attorney for the Missoula Conflict Public Defender's Office while I worked under her tutorship as an Assistant Public Defender.

The dictionary defines exemplary as "serving as a desirable model" or "representing the best of its kind." Ms. Rapkoch comes to mind when I hear these definitions. Since I have known Ms. Rapkoch, she has always strived and succeeded above and beyond in performing her duties, helping others, showing compassion for the community, clients, and co-workers, and showcasing her knowledge in the legal field. I am certain she would make a courteous, passionate, knowledgeable, and fair judge if selected.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jenks

Attorney at Law

April 30, 2022

Governor Greg Gianforte
State of Montana Office of the Governor
P.O. BOX 200801
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Governor Gianforte,

I write to offer my strong support for Alisha Rapkoch as an appointee for Montana's Twentieth District Court Judgeship, Lake and Sanders Counties.

"Tireless," "tenacious," and "super intelligent" are adjectives I would use to describe Alisha Rapkoch. I am acquainted with Ms. Rapkoch through her assistance at the Public Defender's Billings Conflict Office, where I work as a full-time Assistant Public Defender.

Her legal experience alone makes her well-suited to preside over matters handled in a District Court like Drug Court, child/adult neglect and abuse cases, divorce proceedings, adoptions, business disputes, and criminal matters. When Ms. Rapkoch prepares legal arguments and conclusions, they are always clear, ethical, and well-researched. If she doesn't happen to know some aspect of the law as applied to a particular set of facts or a complex issue, be it criminal or civil, she will have it thoroughly researched, cited, and briefed in a matter of days. She does this repeatedly and relishes every minute of the process.

Last year, management asked Ms. Rapkoch to handle a serious, challenging, and complex case in Billings. Most attorneys, when asked, would shy away from a case of this nature, let alone in a jurisdiction 500 miles away from home. She could have quickly declined. Instead, she came forward and took the assignment because she knew it needed to be handled and handled correctly once and for all. She and her co-counsel appear in person for every hearing. They travel seven hours one way and come prepared and energetic. She is so intelligent and generous with her knowledge. I have learned to be a better attorney by reading her research and understanding her legal positions. I am very grateful to know her.

Alisha Rapkoch will make an excellent District Court Judge. She will manage her courtroom with poise, intelligence, and respect for all involved, from judicial staff to law enforcement, attorneys, clerks, plaintiffs, and defendants. I wholeheartedly support Ms. Rapkoch as the next District Court Judge for Lake and Saunders Counties.

Respectfully,



Darcy Critchfield
Assistant Public Defender
Billings Conflict Office,
207 N. Broadway, CO-15
Billings, MT 59101

From: [Jake Coolidge](#)
To: [NominateJudges](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Rapkoch Nomination
Date: Thursday, May 5, 2022 3:48:03 PM

Jacob Coolidge

Missoula, MT

In re: Support of Alisha Rapkoch

Governor Gianforte:

I am writing to enthusiastically endorse Alisha Rapkoch for the vacant District Court position in the 20th Judicial District. Alisha's reputation as a tenacious defender of the Constitution and dedicated advocate precede her. In addition to knowing Alisha by reputation, I had the pleasure of working with her during her tenure as the manager of the Conflict Division of the Office of the State Public Defender in Missoula. Her legal acumen, passion for justice, and adherence to constitutional principles equip her to be an outstanding member of the judiciary.

Alisha has a broad range of experience after working for years as a public defender. Within the Office of the State Public Defender, Alisha has a notorious reputation for her strong grasp on the law and ability to understand it in esoteric and nuanced ways. She has represented individuals on a broad range of charges, including the most serious in Montana Code, and has subsequently dealt with a vast amount of legal and evidentiary issues that will enable her to adeptly rule on anything that is brought before her.

Perhaps more important than her legal acumen, Alisha always has an innate sense and passion for justice and recognizes the humanity in those that come before the Court. Having represented individuals charged with offenses for years, Alisha has an acute understanding of the impacts the legal system can have on people, the gravity of judicial decisions, and the need for empathy. For the judiciary to be effective, it must recognize the impacts its decisions have on individuals and exercise discretion wisely and prudently. Alisha's experiences with the hundreds of people she has represented, and firsthand knowledge of the impacts the legal system has on people, place her in a unique ability to accurately apply the law while maintaining empathy, compassion, and maintaining justice.

Paramount to all, Alisha has demonstrated her commitment to the Constitutions of the United

States and Montana. Rather than pursuing private practice or corporate law, Alisha has dedicated her career to upholding the tenets of the Bill of Rights. Being a public defender can be thankless work. Upholding the principles of the Constitution can be exhausting in the face of untenable caseloads, inadequate pay, and skepticism from the community. Despite the challenges of the work, Alisha has dedicated herself to upholding the constitutional principles we all hold dear. I am confident that her commitment to the Constitution will be reflected in her sound work as a jurist.

As a former public defender and current judge, I readily identify the need to have different perspectives on the bench, especially from those who have represented indigent defendants. I believe that Alisha would be an outstanding judge if selected. If you have any questions about my support of Alisha, or would like to discuss her application further, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Hon. Jacob Coolidge

Honorable Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 200801
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Judicial nominee Alisha Rapkoch for the Montana 20th Judicial District Court

Dear Sir,

I write to add my recommendation to the three dozen or so others posted to date on the Governor's "Nominate Judges" web page on behalf of Ms. Alisha Rapkoch. When I first considered make this recommendation, immediately two phrases came to mind when I considered the prospect of Ms. Rapkoch as a District Judge. First, "thorough." Every opportunity I have had to view Ms. Rapkoch's legal work, in the court room advocating for a client, out court giving advise on issues in a case while consulting, or in the classroom/conference room teaching or instructing on the law, I saw an attorney who was not going to miss an argument or issues on either side of the discussion. She generally left no item unconsidered or missing. It would seem that after her input, there was little left to be considered on either side of the issue. All contingencies were considered and covered.

The Second phrase that came immediately came to my mind was "judicial temperament." For me that phase is multi-faceted. This would include comportment and presences in the courtroom. A judge who has appropriate judicial temperament is patient enough to not only listen to all sides but also to honestly consider and weigh the various argument with an independent analysis of the issues based in the what the law dictates. This judge's only agenda would be to what the law requires not to personal whims. Lady Justice is blindfolded—no respecter of persons. With Ms. Rapkoch, I am confident that her intent would be to come to the correct legal answer and would not be rooted in some predetermined outcome.

Good judicial temperament includes a judge's deportment in the court room. Ms. Rapkoch would work to see that all parties are treated fairly and with respect. While she would be "firm and decisive" she would also be "kind" and "compassionate." I concur with these terms as applied to this nominee by others who have written on her behalf. A Judge in a community, especially in small communities like Polson, Ronan, Plains, and Thompson Falls, ought to be "exemplars" to the communities. People look to them for stability, justice, fairness, and "quiet confidence. Ms. Rapkoch is not one to bluster or bravado, but rather she would exude "quite confidence."

I also concur with those that have praised her "sharp legal mind," "compassion," "empathy," and "highest ethical standards." She is "inquisitive," "well-rounded," and community-minded. I wholeheartedly endorse her appointment to a judgeship in the 20th Judicial District.

Sincerely,

//S// Scott B. Johnson
Attorney at Law
BOX 223
Troy, Montana 59935

Brent Getty
3506 Mainview Drive
Missoula, Montana 59803
(406) 471-7304 • brent.getty@gmail.com

May 5, 2022

Governor Greg Gianforte
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 2000801
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Letter of Support for Alisha Rapkoch

Dear Governor Gianforte,

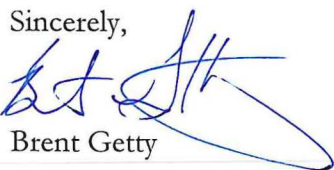
I write in support of Alisha Rapkoch to be appointed to fill the judicial vacancy in the Twentieth Judicial District. I have worked with Ms. Rapkoch for many years, first as a fellow attorney in the Kalispell Public Defender Office and later when she served as a primary trainer for the training department of the Office of the State Public Defender.

Ms. Rapkoch has one of the sharpest legal minds in Montana. She is thorough in her approach to legal analysis of statutory and constitutional law. She is meticulous in how she litigates her cases and never loses sight of striving for justice. She does not shy away from taking tough cases that have literal life and death consequences. She has litigated cases throughout Montana, including in districts far from her home in Kalispell.

During her legal career, Ms. Rapkoch has been a leader for the Office of the State Public Defender. She has been a mentor for the other attorneys whether as an attorney in the Kalispell or as the manager for the Missoula Conflict Office. When I was planning training events, Ms. Rapkoch was readily willing to help, even when she was carrying complex and serious felony cases. Beyond the courtroom, Alisha exhibits her values by being involved in her community by organizing on behalf of youth education and the Flathead County Youth Home.

I had the honor of recommending Ms. Rapkoch to be promoted within the Office of the State Public Defender and I am again honored to recommend her for the appointment to the Twentieth Judicial District. In Ms. Rapkoch, you will get a judge that will be thorough, diligent, and fair. You could not ask for a better judge.

Sincerely,



Brent Getty

Law Office of Pete Wood
1604 N. 30th Street
Boise, ID 83703
(208) 891-9546
petewoodlaw@gmail.com

May 6, 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte,

My name is Pete Wood and I am a lawyer currently living in Boise, Idaho; although I was a public defender in Montana from 2018-2020. I am writing this in letter in support of Alisha Rapkoch's application to fill the 20th Judicial Vacancy in Lake/Sanders County.

I met Alisha at an OPD "bootcamp" in Helena in 2018. I was a baby public defender at the time and Alisha was an instructor at the bootcamp. There are countless reasons you should select Alisha to fill the Judicial Vacancy in Lake/Sanders County, but in the interest of brevity I will list just three:

First, Alisha is incredibly gracious and easy to get along with. She is one of the only highly effective criminal lawyers I know who as far as I can tell has maintained a great relationship with prosecutors, court staff, and all of her clients (who absolutely love her). This is an incredibly rare accomplishment I can assure you. Alisha is the embodiment of professionalism.

Second, Alisha is generous with her time and eager to help others (especially young and less experienced ones like myself). For example, during my stint at OPD she was always available when I reached out to her for her for help. I will be forever grateful for her generosity and sagacious advice. More importantly, her graciousness and eagerness to help others will go a long way on the bench. After all, courtrooms are the emergency rooms of our society. And I think we can all agree we want problem solvers in our emergency rooms.

Third, Alisha is the single hardest working lawyer I know. For this reason, more than any other, I can say without equivocation that Alisha will be a fantastic Judge. We need Judges who are willing to invest time and energy in the preparation and understanding of their cases. As doing so leaves litigants feeling that they were heard and their positions' respected—which in turn preserves the integrity of the judiciary. This is not always easy given that by definition judges must pick winners and losers. BUT, when a Judge is willing to work extraordinarily hard, litigants exit the courtroom feeling they received a fair shake—win or lose.

To use a simple example, suppose there is a (possible) last second touchdown that will decide the Super Bowl. The offense thinks the receiver caught the ball inbounds, while the defense maintains the received had one foot out of bounds. Do you want a

referee who wasn't paying attention and is unwilling to spend the time to review the catch?—or do you want a ref who is willing to put in the work and review the play in slow motion from every possible angle? The same principle is true in a court of law. Because while the winner will be happy regardless, only if the ref (or judge) worked hard to reach what s/he believed was the correct result will the losing party feel the game was fair. I simply cannot overstate the importance of this principle, which is why more than any other reason you should choose Alisha to fill the vacancy.

In sum, Alisha is without question one of the best lawyers I know. She exemplifies what it means to be a public servant and advocate in the most honorable sense of the word. I could not recommend her more highly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be the name "Ed" written in a cursive, stylized script.

MAURY SOLOMON

ATTORNEY AT-LAW

Admitted in Montana and New York

P.O. Box 1720 • Whitefish, Montana • 59937 • 406-890-6349

May 10, 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte:

I write to share my enthusiastic support of Alisha Rapkoch's application for appointment to the Twentieth Judicial District Court. I too am an attorney in the Kalispell office of the State Public Defender having begun my legal career in the Criminal Defense Division of the Legal Aid Society in New York City in 1992.

I have known Alisha since she joined the office as an unpaid intern. Once admitted to the Montana Bar, she promptly rose through the ranks selflessly taking on the most challenging cases, conducting exhaustive research and litigation, and is now recognized as one of the most skilled legal professionals in the state. Alisha has devoted herself to improving the practice of every attorney in our office. She is a natural team builder and leader, and assumed a managing role in our bi-monthly staff meetings and serious case review sessions. Alisha further assumed a significant management role supervising case assignments for over a hundred attorneys spanning numerous counties in the agency's conflict division.

Public defense is not an easy career. Nevertheless, Alisha remains eminently professional and is a joy to know and work with. I had the opportunity to support Alisha on one of her most serious cases spanning a nearly two year period. Through lengthy and complex litigation, many hearings, witness interviews and client meetings, I witnessed firsthand Alisha's tremendous legal capacity, empathy and professionalism. This case involved the intersection of acute mental illness and addiction resulting in grievous trauma and victimization. Despite Alisha's unwavering dedication to advancing her client's rights to achieve a just outcome, the victim in that case recently shared with me that she had an entirely positive experience with Alisha's representation of her perpetrator, and that she wishes to pursue a career for herself in a criminal justice-related field or social services. This young woman in fact recently joined our office as a member of our support staff without any hesitation about working closely with Alisha; another remarkable testament to Alisha's caring and empathetic character.

I consider Alisha a trusted colleague and ally, but we do not discuss politics and I have little knowledge of her political beliefs. Nevertheless, there are few greater conservative values than that expressed through Alisha's strong advocacy promoting closer adherence to our State and Federal Constitutions here in Montana's justice system. She is eminently fair-minded, thoughtful and considered in all her efforts. Her appointment to the Twentieth Judicial District Court will not disappoint, and will well serve any and all parties appearing in her courtroom.

Sincerely,

Maury Solomon