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September 2, 2021

Judicial Resources Commission
c/o Stephanie F. Stacy
Room 2219, State Capitol
Lincoln, NE 68509

To the members of the Judicial Resources Commission:

I write in support of filling the District 11 County Court North Platte, Nebraska vacancy created when the Honorable Kent Turnbull resigned. I am the elected Lincoln County Attorney and have served in this capacity since 2008. In these troubled times, I have watched our caseload, most notably our juvenile work, substantially increase. Our county has the third highest 43-247(3)(a) court filings for children ages 0-3 years, many as result of substance abuse disorders. The level of violence between people has also increased leading to the addition of a fifth criminal prosecutor.

With the rise in juvenile and criminal filings, the Lincoln County court docket prior to Judge Turnbull's resignation was congested. Evidentiary hearings were frequently set 4-6 weeks down as that was the earliest available date. With the current vacancy, the delay is even longer sometimes delaying permanency for children or treatment for mentally ill adults.

These troubled times have also impacted people's willingness to compromise and negotiate a mutually satisfying resolution. The October 2021 county court jury trial was established in December 2020 and scheduled to last 4 days. As I write you, Lincoln County Court has 15 jury trials scheduled with only 1 judge. The week prior to the county court jury trial, jurors in the Lincoln County District Court will be listening to a 4-5 day murder trial.

In short, the citizens of Lincoln County do not have sufficient judicial resources available to them without quickly filling the vacancy left by Judge Turnbull. I respectfully ask that you fill the current vacancy in District 11 County Court, with the principal office in Lincoln County.

Respectfully,


Rebecca Harling
Lincoln County Attorney

EXHIBIT

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