

Governor Announces Members of The First Public Defender Commission

(HELENA) - Governor Brian Schweitzer today announced members of the first Public Defender Commission.

“This commission is committed to making sure justice prevails for the citizens of this state,” said Governor Brian Schweitzer. “To be a fair and just society we must help the least and the last - those that are often discriminated against, whether for economic, racial or any other reason. We all deserve equal treatment under the law.”

Daniel Donovan, Great Falls - Donovan has been a self employed attorney with the firm Thompson, Potts & Donovan, P.C. of Great Falls since 2000. He served as Senior Assistant Federal Defender in Great Falls, Acting Great Falls City Court Judge, Chief Public Defender for Cascade County, and has been in private practice off and on since 1977. Donovan holds a Juris Doctorate from Hastings College of Law in San Francisco. He fulfills the qualification of an attorney nominated by the Montana Supreme Court.

Mike Sherwood, Missoula - Sherwood is currently an attorney in private practice in Missoula as Michael J. Sherwood P.C. and has been since 1988. He has also practices with the firms Sherwood & Englund and Hood & Sherwood, both in Missoula. Sherwood received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Montana. Sherwood fulfills the qualification of an attorney nominated by the Montana Supreme Court.

Stephen Nardi, Kalispell - Nardi is currently an attorney in private practice in Kalispell with the firm Sherlock & Nardi. He received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Montana Law School. He spent 22 years as a public defender in Flathead County. Nardi fulfills the qualification of an attorney nominated by the State Bar with experience in felony defense with 1 year as a full-time public defender.

James Park Taylor, Pablo - Taylor currently serves as the Managing Attorney for the Tribal Defenders Office of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe. He was in private practice in Missoula from 1981-1996. Taylor received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Montana. He fulfills the qualifications of being an attorney nominated by the State Bar with experience in defense of juvenile delinquency and the federal Indian Child Welfare Act.

Wendy Holton, Helena - Holton has been an attorney in private practice in Helena since 1989. Prior to that she was a law clerk for Judge Gordon R. Bennett. She is a substitute City Court Judge for the City of Helena and a substitute Justice of the Peace for Jefferson County. Holton received her Juris Doctorate from the University of Montana and was an E. Barrett Prettyman Fellow at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington D.C. Holton fulfills the qualifications of an attorney nominated by the State Bar who represents criminal defense lawyers.

Doug Kaercher (pronounced Care Ker), Havre - Kaercher is currently a Hill County Commissioner, first elected in 1997. He was a Havre City Councilman from 1994-1996. Kaercher is also a small business owner in Havre. He fulfills the qualifications of a public representative nominated by the Senate President.

Caroline Fleming, Miles City - Fleming is currently the Executive Director of the Custer Network Against Domestic Abuse, an organization providing services and information regarding domestic abuse and sexual assault. Fleming fulfills the qualifications of a public representative nominated by the House Speaker.

Tara Veazey, Helena - Veazey currently serves as Project Director with the Eastern Montana Self-Help Law Project. Prior to that she was with the Montana Legal Services Association and also worked with the King County Public Defenders in Seattle, WA. She received her Juris Doctorate from Yale Law School. Veazey fulfills the qualifications of a member of an organization advocating on behalf of indigent persons.

Theda New Breast, Babb - New Breast is a member of the Blackfeet and is currently the Director of New Breast and Old Crow Inc, a family wellness consulting group. Her consulting work includes projects for the National Indian Child Welfare Association, the Siksika Nation and National Indian Women's Health Resource Center. She has her bachelor's degree and her Masters of Public Health from the University of California. New Breast fills the position as a member of an organization advocating on behalf of racial minorities.

Jennifer Hensley, Butte - Hensley is a paralegal for McCarthy Law P.C. in Butte. Prior, she was the Camp Director for Camp Huff N' Puff for the American Lung Association of the Northern Rockies. Hensley is a member of several advocacy organizations. She has her bachelor's degree in cell and molecular biology and chemistry from the University of Montana. Hensley fills the position as a member of an organization advocating on behalf of people with mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Betty Bichsel (pronounced Bixel), Edgar - Bichsel is a member of the Chippewa and prevention educator with Journey Recovery Program in Billings. Prior she worked as a first and second grade teacher at St. Charles Indian Mission School in Poplar. She received her bachelor's degree and her specific learning disabilities certification from the University of North Dakota. Bichsel fills the position as an employee of an organization providing addictive behavior counseling.

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