

IN THE SUPREME COURT  
STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA

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2023 ND 205

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In the Matter of the Vacancy in Judgeship No. 2, with Chambers in Grand  
Forks, Northeast Central Judicial District

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No. 20230284

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**Per curiam.**

[¶1] On August 22, 2023, Governor Doug Burgum notified the Supreme Court of the resignation of the Honorable Lolita G. Hartl Romanick, Judge of the District Court, with chambers in Grand Forks, Northeast Central Judicial District, effective November 1, 2023. Judge Romanick’s retirement creates a vacancy under N.D.C.C. § 27-05-02.1.

[¶2] Under N.D.C.C. § 27-05-02.1, this Court is required to review vacancies that occur and determine, within 90 days of receiving notice of a vacancy, whether the office is necessary for effective judicial administration. This Court may, consistent with that determination, order a vacancy filled or order the vacant office be transferred to another judicial district in which an additional judge is necessary, or abolish a vacant judicial office, with or without a transfer.

[¶3] Under [N.D. Sup. Ct. Admin. R. 7.2](#), notice of a written consultation with attorneys and judges and other interested persons in the Northeast Central Judicial District was posted September 5, 2023, on the website of the Supreme Court regarding the vacancy created by Judge Romanick’s resignation of Judgeship No. 2. Written comments on the vacancy were permitted through September 29, 2023. This procedure is sufficient for purposes of the consultation required under N.D.C.C. § 27-05-02.1.

[¶4] A report containing population and caseload trends, and other criteria identified in [N.D. Sup. Ct. Admin. R. 7.2](#), Section 4, was filed September 25, 2023, by the Northeast Central Judicial District. The State Court Administrator provided weighted caseload statistics through August 31, 2023, annualized to project the total caseload for calendar year 2023 for the Northeast Central Judicial District and statewide.

[¶5] The Northeast Central Judicial District is comprised of Grand Forks and Nelson Counties. The district has six judges chambered in Grand Forks. The district has no judicial referee. This judgeship is responsible for an equal share of the civil and criminal caseloads in the district.

[¶6] According to the district's report, the population in Grand Forks County increased eight percent from 2010 to 2020. The population in Nelson County decreased 15 percent during the same time period. The population prediction through 2025 shows an additional increase in Grand Forks County and additional decrease in Nelson County.

[¶7] Grand Forks County has four problem-solving courts: one adult drug court, one juvenile drug court, one domestic violence court, and one veteran's court. The judicial officer need for the problem-solving courts is 0.532.

[¶8] The district's report reflects a decrease in case filings from 7,086 in 2019 to 5,888 in 2022. The district's report states that based on projections, case filings are expected to increase in 2023 to 6,840. According to the weighted caseload study, the judicial officer need remained consistent from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023. Addition of Judgeship No. 6 by the 68th legislative assembly reduced the shortage to less than one judge. Based on the case filings and the availability of six district judges, the Northeast Central Judicial District shows a 0.37 shortage in judicial officer need. Vacating or moving this judgeship would create a shortage in the district and make it difficult to provide effective judicial services.

[¶9] Based on the record before us, we determine the district judge is necessary for effective judicial administration in Grand Forks and the Northeast Central Judicial District.

[¶10] IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, that Judgeship No. 2 at Grand Forks in the Northeast Central Judicial District be filled in the manner provided by N.D.C.C. ch. 27-25.

[¶11] Jon J. Jensen, C.J.

Daniel J. Crothers

Lisa Fair McEvers

Jerod E. Tufte

Douglas A. Bahr