FILED

4/20/2026

Clerk, U.S. District Court
District of Montana
Missoula Division

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MONTANA

In Re: APPOINTMENT OF A MERIT SELECTION PANEL FOR UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE	ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 26-15 (AMENDED)

Pursuant to Vol. 3, Ch.4, § 420.30 of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy* (the "*Guide*"), IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that a merit selection panel (the "panel") shall be convened to assist the court in the selection of a candidate to fill the full-time United States magistrate judge position in the Great Falls Division.

The following provisions shall apply to the work of the panel:

1. Membership: The following individuals are appointed to the panel:

Randy Gray
Great Falls, Montana
(non-attorney panel member)

Rachel Julagay, Federal Defenders of Montana
104 2nd St S.
Great Falls, MT 59401

Mark Smith, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Montana
2601 2nd Ave N. Suite 3200
Billings, MT 59101

Steph Hollar
101 River Dr N.
Great Falls, MT 59401

Kiely Keane
900 N Last Chance Gulch,
Helena, MT 59601

John Strandell
Cascade, Montana
(non-attorney panel member)

John Harrison
PO Box 278
Pablo, Montana 59855

Tammy Lacey
Great Falls, Montana
(non-attorney panel member)

Dugan Coburn
Great Falls, Montana
(non-attorney panel member)

Due to a conflict arising during the application period, attorney Ben Snipes

withdrew from this merit selection panel. Randy Gray shall serve as chair of the panel and shall schedule and preside over all meetings of the panel.

2. Procedure: Decisions of the panel must be by a majority vote of all the members. The panel shall review all applications and may, in its discretion, personally interview applicants. The panel must give due consideration to all qualified applicants without regard to race, sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, disability status, or political affiliation. The panel shall determine, from among the applicants, the five individuals most qualified to serve as a United States magistrate judge. The panel shall produce a report identifying the five most qualified applicants, and shall attach to the report all written information received or prepared by the panel concerning the recommended applicants. The court may accept a list containing fewer than five names for good cause shown by the panel in its report.

3. Scheduling: The panel is advised that a public notice advertising the vacancy and soliciting applications was issued on March 10, 2026, and that the deadline for submission of applications is April 6, 2026. The clerk of court shall deliver to each panel member a full set of applications and any related materials on or before April 10, 2026. In accordance with Vol. 3, Ch. 4, § 420.30 of the *Guide*, the panel shall deliver to the clerk of court its report of the finalists and any supporting materials no later than June 8, 2026, unless the chair requests and receives an extension from the chief judge of the court.

4. Travel: Federal law states that panel members who are required to travel for meetings are allowed travel or transportation expenses (mileage, accommodations, etc.) and subsistence while in travel status. The rates of reimbursement are the same as those provided to federal employees.

5. Administrative Support: The clerk of court shall assist the chair in the panel's business by performing such administrative tasks as are necessary, including but not limited to: compiling and disseminating materials to panel members; scheduling and making all necessary arrangements for telephonic conferences and/or meetings; scheduling applicant interviews, as needed; assisting in the preparation of the panel's report, as needed; requesting travel authorizations from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts for any travel by panel members; and processing reasonable claims for reimbursement.

6. Confidentiality: All information made available to the members of the

panel in the performance of their duties, including the names of applicants and the identities of individuals recommended by the panel, must be kept in strict confidence by the panel and the court, provided, however, that applicants may, upon request, waive the confidentiality requirements to allow the court or the panel to publicize the applicants' names in order to solicit comments from the bar and the public. No colleagues or references for any applicant shall be contacted by the panel members for purposes of discussing an applicant's candidacy without a prior written release from the applicant in question. The chair shall direct the members of the panel concerning the disposal or retention of information subject to the confidentiality requirement.

7. Notice of Restriction. As required by Vol. 3, Ch. 4, § 420.30.10(d) of the *Guide to Judiciary Policy*, all members of the panel have been advised in writing of the one-year prohibition on merit selection panel members applying to serve as a United States magistrate judge. All members of the merit selection panel have chosen to serve after having been advised of the one-year restriction.

The clerk of court shall deliver a copy of this order to each panel member, and shall include the following documents:

(1) a copy of each application received;

(2) the public notice advertising the position;

(3) Volume 3, Chapter 4 of the *Guide* on selection and appointment of magistrate judges; and

(4) Chapters 7 through 10 of the Administrative Office publication *The Selection, Appointment, and Reappointment of United States Magistrate Judges* (October 2024).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the clerk of court shall distribute this order to all of the judicial officers of this district, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, and the office of the circuit executive of the Ninth Circuit and publish this order on the court's public website.

Dated this 20th day of April, 2026.

Brian Morris, Chief Judge
United States District Court