Senate Confirms Two Nominees for Federal Judgeships in Montana

SAN FRANCISCO – The Senate has confirmed President Obama’s nominations of Montana Supreme Court Justice Brian Morris and Montana State District Judge Susan P. Watters to serve as district judges for the United States District Court for the District of Montana. The confirmations came late Thursday, December 12, 2013, on roll call votes of 75-20 for Justice Morris and 77-19 for Judge Watters.

Justice Morris fills a judgeship left vacant when Judge Sam E. Haddon assumed senior status on December 31, 2012. Judge Watters fills a judgeship left vacant on March 18, 2013, when then-Chief District Judge Richard F. Cebull assumed senior status. Judge Cebull has since retired from the federal bench.


Judge Watters, 55, has served on the Thirteenth Judicial District Court in Billings, Mont., since 1998. Prior to her appointment to the bench, Judge Watters had worked as a senior associate at

A native of Billings, Judge Watters received her B.A., with honors, from Eastern Montana College, now Montana State University, in 1980, and her J.D. from the University of Montana School of Law in 1988.

The U.S. District Court for the District of Montana had 980 new case filings in fiscal year 2012, up 1 percent from the prior fiscal year. The court is authorized three judgeships and currently has no vacancy.

Federal district court judges, appointed under Article III of the Constitution, are nominated by the president, confirmed by the Senate and serve lifetime appointments upon good behavior. Their current annual salary is $174,000.

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