



Public Information Office  
**United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit**

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · (415) 355-8901 Fax

**NEWS RELEASE**

December 13, 2013

Contact: David Madden (415) 355-8800

## **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.

Justice Morris, 50, has served on the Montana Supreme Court since 2005. He served previously as the solicitor general of the Montana Department of Justice since 2001 and as a senior legal officer at the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2000 to 2001. He engaged in private practice at the law firm of Goetz, Madden & Dunn, PC, in Bozeman from 1995 to 2000 and was a legal assistant for the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague from 1994 to 1995.

A native of Butte, Montana, Justice Morris attended Stanford University, where he received his B.A. in 1986 and M.A. in 1987. He received his J.D. with distinction from Stanford Law School in 1992. Following law school, he clerked for Judge John T. Noonan, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit from 1992 to 1993, and for Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist of the U.S. Supreme Court, from 1993 to 1994.

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

Hendrickson, Everson, Noennig & Woodward, PC, in Billings since 1996 and was a sole practitioner of Watters Law Firm from 1995 to 1996. Judge Watters served as a deputy county attorney for the Yellowstone County Attorney's Office from 1989 to 1995.

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.

###