



Indiana Supreme Court

Justice Geoffrey G. Slaughter • courts.in.gov

April 29, 2024

VIA Electronic Mail
Original by Hand Delivery

The Honorable Eric J. Holcomb
Governor of Indiana
c/o Ms. Sharon Jackson, Deputy General Counsel
206 Indiana State House
200 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Governor Holcomb,

As chairman of the St. Joseph County Judicial Nominating Commission, I am pleased to transmit the names of the five most highly qualified candidates from among those who applied for the current vacancy in the St. Joseph Superior Court 1, Criminal Division. This judicial position became available when Judge Cristal Brisco was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Indiana on January 26, 2024. On April 15, the commission met in person, interviewed all nine applicants, and selected these five nominees:

Christoher C. Fronk, Esq.
Magistrate Elizabeth A. Hardtke
Kristen T. Kocsis, Esq.
John M. Maciejczyk, Esq.
Magistrate Matthew R. Raper

In selecting these nominees, the commission considered the eligibility requirements and nonexclusive statutory factors in Indiana Code section 33-33-71-37, including each applicant's legal education, writings, public-service activities (including efforts to improve the administration of justice), legal experience, and probable judicial temperament. The commission also considered the applicants' experience given the

criminal docket of the incoming judge in Superior Court 1. As required by statute and on the commission's behalf, I outline each candidate's qualifications.

Christopher C. Fronk, Esq.

Christopher C. Fronk, born in Sioux City, Iowa, has been a dedicated public servant for almost 27 years, serving as a deputy prosecuting attorney in LaPorte County (1996 to 2014) and St. Joseph County (2015 to present), handling principally homicide cases.

Mr. Fronk attended Valparaiso University on a football scholarship and was awarded a four-year presidential academic scholarship while earning his Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. After graduating in 1993, he enrolled in law school at the Valparaiso University School of Law. During law school, he received the Charles L. Vaughan Award, presented to the top students in the trial-practice course. He earned his law degree in 1996.

After law school, Mr. Fronk began working as a deputy prosecuting attorney in LaPorte County. He spent over 18 years in this role, starting with juvenile-delinquency proceedings, progressing through the full spectrum of a criminal caseload, and ultimately becoming a senior trial deputy specializing in homicides and major felonies.

In 2015, Mr. Fronk moved to St. Joseph County and currently serves as chief deputy prosecuting attorney. His primary responsibilities include handling all aspects of homicide prosecutions as lead prosecutor and team leader of the homicide staff. Since 2015, he has prosecuted approximately 100 homicide cases. Mr. Fronk prides himself on his experience in all aspects and nuances of major criminal trials, including rules of procedure and evidence.

Mr. Fronk takes personal interest in ensuring that the families and friends of the victims he represents have a voice throughout the process, especially during their darkest times. He frequently lectures and speaks at numerous schools on such topics as law, law enforcement, forensic science, and expert witnesses.

Outside of the courtroom, Mr. Fronk is an active member of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School in LaPorte, having served as the president of the congregation from 2017 to 2021. He is also a member of the New Prairie Touchdown Club in New Carlisle and serves as president of the high school's athletic booster club. He is an avid runner and weightlifter and is married with two sons and a daughter.

Magistrate Elizabeth A. Hardtke

A Wisconsin native, the Honorable Elizabeth A. Hardtke has spent her legal career in public service in St. Joseph County, representing all sides of the legal spectrum, and has served as a magistrate in the St. Joseph Superior Court since 2015.

Magistrate Hardtke graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Bachelor of Arts degree in behavioral science and law before earning her law degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1999. After obtaining her law license in Indiana in 2000, she joined the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office. As a deputy prosecutor, she worked within the Special Victims Unit, prosecuting a wide variety of cases ranging from juvenile delinquency to sexual assault, as well as physical-abuse investigations. While a prosecutor, Magistrate Hardtke represented the State in many misdemeanor bench and felony jury trials.

In 2005, Magistrate Hardtke joined the St. Joseph County Public Defender Department. For the first five years, she specialized in juvenile cases. In 2010, she transitioned to the adult division, where she represented adults facing misdemeanor charges. At the same time, she maintained a private practice focused on family and criminal-law matters. She continued to work in both capacities until 2015 when she was appointed a magistrate of the St. Joseph Superior Court.

As one of the court's four magistrates, Magistrate Hardtke oversees a high-volume docket of cases in both the Traffic and Misdemeanor Division and the Small Claims Division for all of St. Joseph County. She has presided over hundreds of criminal and civil bench trials. Additionally, she has been called upon to assist Felony Division judges, where she has presided over jury trials ranging from level 6 felonies to murder. In 2023, she collaborated with the local Justice Reinvestment Advisory Council to start a pilot court referred to as the Behavioral Services Court for defendants with mental-health concerns. Today, she presides over that court, and 15 defendants have successfully entered the program.

Beyond her judicial duties, Magistrate Hardtke has been appointed by Chief Justice Loretta Rush to contribute her expertise on two judicial committees. From 2016 to 2023, she served as a member of the Judicial Conference of Indiana's Probation Committee. Currently, she serves on the Conference's criminal bench book committee.

Magistrate Hardtke is married and actively involved in the activities of her four children, including volunteering at games and assisting with fund-raising.

Kristen T. Kocsis, Esq.

Kristen T. Kocsis is committed to public service, beginning with her roles as a deputy prosecutor in Elkhart County and St. Joseph County.

Mrs. Kocsis graduated cum laude from James Madison University in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, where she excelled both academically and athletically on a golf scholarship. In 2016, she graduated magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame Law School, receiving two Dean's awards for excellent achievement in the study of the criminal process and medical malpractice. During law school she served as a research assistant at the law school and was a legal intern at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana.

After graduation, Mrs. Kocsis joined the Elkhart County Prosecutor's Office as a certified legal intern advancing to the position of deputy prosecutor when she obtained her law license in 2016. Over four-and-a-half years, she handled a diverse array of cases spanning traffic violations to major felonies. Her responsibilities included jury and bench trials, evidentiary and suppression hearings, post-conviction relief cases and hearings, evidentiary and suppression hearings, and the intake process.

In 2021, Mrs. Kocsis joined the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office, where she continued to excel in many roles. She currently serves as supervisor of the Traffic and Misdemeanor Division, where she oversees the management and training of new deputy prosecuting attorneys, ensuring they acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their duties successfully. Additionally, she holds the position of lead deputy prosecuting attorney on the St. Joseph County Fatal Crash Team (FACT). In this capacity, she responds to crash scenes, collaborates with law enforcement in investigations, presents cases to a grand jury, makes charging decisions, and prosecutes cases to conclusion. She also represents the prosecutor's office in the newly founded Behavioral Services Court and serves as an on-call deputy prosecuting attorney for felony matters, all while maintaining an active caseload.

During the last five years as a deputy prosecutor, Mrs. Kocsis has tried more than two dozen jury and bench trials, ranging from murder to robbery. She has also provided support as a supervisor at counsel table during trials to assist her colleagues.

In addition to her professional commitments, Mrs. Kocsis volunteers her time to speak on criminal law at Indiana University South Bend and serves as a mock trial judge at Notre Dame Law School and local high schools. She has previously served as a

trainer to law enforcement on evidence and other operating-while-intoxicated investigations.

Mrs. Kocsis is married and expecting their first child.

John M. Maciejczyk, Esq.

John M. Maciejczyk, a military veteran, has lived in St. Joseph County for nearly three decades, spending the past twenty years of his legal career as a federal prosecutor.

Mr. Maciejczyk began his military journey in 1972 when he enrolled as a midshipman at the United States Naval Academy, beginning active duty with the U.S. Navy. Graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1976, he earned many accolades during his service, including the Navy Achievement Award, Navy Unit Commendation, and Sea Service Ribbon. Mr. Maciejczyk continued in the U.S. Navy Reserves from 1981 to 1989.

In 1981, Mr. Maciejczyk used a GI Bill scholarship to enroll at the University of Notre Dame Law School, where he graduated in 1984, serving on the law review for two years. During law school, he volunteered as a firefighter, assisted Professor Kenneth E. Ripple (now a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit), and completed summer clerkships at two law firms.

After law school, Mr. Maciejczyk served as a law clerk to the Honorable Ruggero J. Aldisert, Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, for two years until 1986. Then, from 1987 through 1998, he practiced civil litigation as an associate at five different law firms in Houston, Baltimore, South Bend, and Elkhart, while also serving as editor-in-chief at the National Institute for Trial Advocacy in Notre Dame, Indiana, from 1994 to 1996.

Transitioning into public service in 1999, Mr. Maciejczyk became chief deputy prosecutor for St. Joseph County, a position he held until 2002. After a brief return to private practice, in 2003 he became a deputy prosecutor in Elkhart County. In 2004, he became an Assistant United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana in South Bend, where he has served the past twenty years.

Since becoming a federal prosecutor, Mr. Maciejczyk has worked on cases involving corporate fraud and child-exploitation crimes. For the past two years, he has served as the National Security and Domestic Terrorism coordinator for the Northern District of Indiana and maintains a Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information

(TS/SCI) security clearance, collaborating closely with various federal investigative agencies. During his career, he has tried 125 criminal jury trials and six civil trials in state and federal courts.

Beyond his professional endeavors, Mr. Maciejczyk is actively involved in his church and is a member of the Knights of Columbus, Naval Academy Alumni Association, and the Surface Navy Association. Married with three teenage children, he volunteers his time coaching youth sports and Boy Scouts in the community.

Magistrate Matthew R. Raper

Since 2021, the Honorable Matthew R. Raper has been as a magistrate in the St. Joseph Superior Court, following a career as a deputy prosecuting attorney in St. Joseph County.

Magistrate Raper graduated from Truman State University in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration, concentrating in management and attending on a full-tuition scholarship for academic performance. He then pursued his law degree at Indiana University Maurer School of Law, graduating in 2009. During law school, he gained practical experience as a law clerk and certified legal intern at the Greene County Prosecutor's Office in Bloomfield.

After law school, Magistrate Raper began in private practice at a small law firm in Terre Haute and later at a firm in Bloomington. His primary focus was defending clients facing criminal charges. In 2012, he moved to the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office as a deputy prosecuting attorney, beginning in the misdemeanor division and later working across the office's various divisions, including juvenile, post-conviction relief, expungements, child support, and felony.

In January 2021, Magistrate Raper became a deputy prosecuting attorney in LaGrange County, handling misdemeanors and Level 6 felonies. Later, he returned part-time to the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office while also working in LaGrange County until securing a full-time position as a magistrate in St. Joseph County in September 2021.

As a judicial officer, Magistrate Raper is one of four magistrates primarily responsible for overseeing criminal-misdemeanor and small-claims dockets in St. Joseph County. Covering for superior-court judges, he has presided over a diverse array of cases, from mental-health commitments to civil collections, and a full felony docket, from arraignment through sentencing. On the bench, he has presided over two

misdemeanor and three felony jury trials, including a high-profile arrest and criminal charge. Approximately 70 percent of the cases he oversees are criminal.

Since 2022, Magistrate Raper has been an active member of the Judicial Conference of Indiana's Limited Jurisdiction and Traffic Law Committee, contributing to the production and revision of various manuals, such as the small-claims bench book. He is also affiliated with the Robert A. Grant Inn of Court and the St. Joseph County Bar Association.

Beyond his professional responsibilities, Magistrate Raper is married and actively involved in the activities of his son and two daughters, including serving as a team dad for the Penn High School girl's wrestling team.

* * *

All five nominees report themselves to be in good health. Based upon their interviews and the commission's assessment, each has a personality well-suited for the bench, along with the legal ability and professional experience to serve with distinction. I am confident you will find each nominee to be of high caliber, and that any of the five nominees would be a credit to the Indiana judiciary.

Sincerely yours,



Geoffrey G. Slaughter,
Chairman, St. Joseph County Judicial Nominating Commission