For Immediate Release

Judicial Nominating Commission announces nominees for District Court judgeship in Butler, Edmonson, Ohio and Hancock counties

FRANKFORT, Ky., Dec. 27, 2016 – The Judicial Nominating Commission, led by Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr., today announced nominees to fill a vacant District Court judgeship for Butler, Edmonson, Hancock and Ohio counties. The counties make up the 38th Judicial District and the vacancy is in the district’s 1st Division.

The three nominees for the judgeship are attorneys Richard Joseph Deye of Morgantown, Joseph Brett “J.B.” Hines of Brownsville and Tara Nicole Ward of Hartford.

Deye has a private law practice and serves as the county attorney for Butler County. He earned his juris doctor from the University of Kentucky College of Law.

Hines has a private law practice and serves as the county attorney for Edmonson County. He earned his juris doctor from the University of Louisville Louis D. Brandeis School of Law.

Ward has a private law practice and serves as the city attorney for the city of Hartford. She earned her juris doctor from the Washington University School of Law in Saint Louis.

The District Court judicial seat became vacant when Judge Renona C. Browning resigned in August 2016.

District Court
District Court judges handle juvenile matters, city and county ordinances, misdemeanors, violations, traffic offenses, probate of wills, arraignments, felony probable cause hearings, small claims involving $2,500 or less, civil cases involving $5,000 or less, voluntary and involuntary mental commitments and cases relating to domestic violence and abuse.

Judicial Nominating Commission
The Judicial Nominating Commission helps fill judicial vacancies by appointment when a vacancy occurs outside of the election cycle. The Kentucky Constitution established the JNC. Ky. Const. § 118; SCR 6.000, et seq.
Judicial Nominating Process
When a judicial vacancy occurs, the executive secretary of the JNC publishes a notice of vacancy in the judicial circuit or the judicial district affected. Attorneys may recommend someone or nominate themselves. The names of the applicants are not released. Once nominations occur, the individuals interested in the position return a questionnaire to the Office of the Chief Justice. Chief Justice Minton then meets with the Judicial Nominating Commission to choose three nominees. Because the Kentucky Constitution requires that three names be submitted to the governor, in some cases the commission submits an attorney’s name even though the attorney did not apply. A letter naming the three nominees is sent to the governor for review. The governor has 60 days to appoint a replacement and his office makes the announcement.

Makeup of the Judicial Nominating Commission
The commission has seven members. The membership is comprised of the chief justice of Kentucky (who also serves as chair), two lawyers elected by all the lawyers in their circuit/district and four Kentucky citizens who are appointed by the governor. The four citizens appointed by the governor must equally represent the two major political parties, so two must be Democrats and two must be Republicans. It is the responsibility of the commission to submit a list of three names to the governor and the governor must appoint a judge from this list of three.

Administrative Office of the Courts
The Administrative Office of the Courts in Frankfort is the operations arm for the state court system. The AOC supports the activities of nearly 3,400 court system employees and 404 elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks. As the fiscal agent for the state court system, the AOC executes the Judicial Branch budget.

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