



Indiana Supreme Court

Justice Geoffrey G. Slaughter • courts.in.gov

November 22, 2023

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 upcoming vacancy in the St. Joseph Superior Court 2, Criminal Division. This judicial position will be available when Judge John M. Marnocha retires on February 1, 2024. On November 15, the commission met in person, interviewed all 13 applicants, and selected these five nominees:

Kenneth Biggins, Jr., Esq.
Magistrate Keith C. Doi
David Francisco, Esq.
Christopher Fronk, Esq.
Magistrate Matthew 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 2. As required by statute and on the commission's behalf, I provide evaluations of each candidate's qualifications.

Kenneth Biggins, Jr., Esq.

Kenneth Biggins, Jr., a St. Joseph County native, has dedicated his entire legal career to public service. Over the past six years, he has served as a deputy prosecuting attorney, handling diverse criminal matters with prosecutor's offices in both St. Joseph and Marshall counties, following his tenure at the Indiana Attorney General's office.

Mr. Biggins obtained his bachelor of arts degree in chemistry, with minors in history and biology, from Indiana University Bloomington in 2009. In 2014, he graduated *magna cum laude* from the Valparaiso University School of Law. During law school, he served as an associate editor of the Valparaiso Law Review, contributing a published case note on tobacco companies and their first amendment speech rights.

Throughout his legal education, Mr. Biggins demonstrated his commitment to the judiciary by working as a law clerk and law extern for federal judges and a federal magistrate in the Northern District of Indiana. He also served as a law clerk for the United States Attorney's Office in the Northern District.

Upon graduation, Mr. Biggins joined the attorney general's office as a Valparaiso Fellow, rotating through its twelve sections over two years including work in the appellate division on criminal and civil appeals. He was the lead author opposing certiorari in a criminal case before the United States Supreme Court, challenging the duration of a traffic stop.

After completing his fellowship, Mr. Biggins returned to South Bend to work for the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office. He handled various cases, including post-conviction relief petitions, felony probation violations, expungements, and requests for specialized driving privileges.

Over the years, Mr. Biggins has transitioned through different divisions at the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office, completing approximately 65 bench trials and several jury trials. Mr. Biggins later moved to a felony court, and then left to work at the Marshall County Prosecutor's Office. He returned to South Bend, and since 2022 has maintained a felony caseload of over 250 cases at the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office, including chairing 19 jury trials ranging from misdemeanors to violent felonies.

In addition to his legal work, since 2017, Mr. Biggins has been an active member of the criminal-law section of the St. Joseph County Bar Association. He is engaged with his community and church, where he serves as a lector and participates in community service initiatives. Outside the courtroom, Mr. Biggins enjoys pursuing various hobbies, including running, playing the guitar and piano, painting, sculpting, and recently mastering the game of golf.

Magistrate Keith C. Doi

Magistrate Keith C. Doi, a St. Joseph County native, brings a wealth of experience from both sides of the bench, having served as a prosecutor, litigator, and, since 2016, a magistrate in the St. Joseph Superior Court. He earned his bachelor of arts degree in political science from Indiana University Bloomington in 1985 and graduated from the Indiana University Maurer School of Law in 1988.

After law school, Magistrate Doi began his legal career as a deputy prosecutor in St. Joseph County, working in the Title IV-D child-support division. His responsibilities included establishing and enforcing child-support orders. He also worked in the misdemeanor division, handling criminal charges, presenting bond arguments, and conducting misdemeanor bench trials.

In 1993, Magistrate Doi transitioned to the Elkhart County Prosecutor's Office, where he was the first full-time director of the Title IV-D child-support division. Under his leadership, the division evolved from a part-time operation to a fully functioning office within Elkhart County. He increased child-support collections significantly and raised community awareness through various speaking engagements.

In 1997, Magistrate Doi entered private law practice in South Bend, joining Kalamaros & Associates, LLP, initially as an associate, and later becoming an equity partner. Specializing in complex civil litigation, he honed his skills in motion practice and trial rules over nearly two decades, handling diverse cases such as product liability, personal injury, legal malpractice, breach of contract, construction accidents and defects, and environmental pollution. His clientele ranged from small businesses to large corporations.

Magistrate Doi assumed his current position in September 2016, serving as one of four magistrates in the St. Joseph Superior Court and overseeing high-volume courts in the small-claims, traffic, and misdemeanor divisions. His caseload involves interaction with the public, particularly unrepresented litigants. Handling small-claims disputes, property-damage, contracts, and a variety of misdemeanor cases, Magistrate Doi has presided over numerous bench trials, resolved over 25 cases, and even stepped in for superior court judges during daily court proceedings. Notably, he takes pride in assisting pro se litigants, ensuring they understand the intricacies of the litigation process.

A dedicated legal professional, Magistrate Doi holds memberships in the Indiana State Bar Association, St. Joseph County Bar Association, and the Judicial Conference of Indiana's Judicial Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee. Outside of his

professional life, he is married with two children and enjoys participating in and watching sporting activities with his family.

David Francisco, Esq.

David Francisco has dedicated over eighteen years of his legal career to criminal law, initially serving as a prosecuting attorney before specializing in criminal defense for the past nine-plus years. As the founding partner of his law firm and a part-time public defender, Mr. Francisco has resided in St. Joseph County since 2005.

Mr. Francisco earned his bachelor of arts degree in psychology with a minor in accounting from the University of California, Los Angeles. After graduation, he spent three years as a senior auditor for Arthur Anderson LLP in Los Angeles, focusing on healthcare financial assurance. While in public accounting, he developed a robust work ethic through the commitment of long hours.

In 2002, Mr. Francisco enrolled at Indiana University Maurer School of Law, where he was inspired by a criminal-law professor to concentrate on criminal law and trial advocacy. During law school, he served as a professional-licensing intern with the Indiana attorney general's consumer protection division, earning his law degree, *cum laude*, in 2005.

Upon graduation, Mr. Francisco moved to South Bend and began his legal career as a deputy prosecuting attorney in Elkhart County. In this role, he volunteered as a mock-trial coach at John Adams High School in South Bend and the Notre Dame Law School, honing his own trial skills in the process. Mr. Francisco handled major felony cases, including capital murder, murder, robbery, major drug offenses, and sex and child-victim offenses. During his career, he has taken 67 cases to jury verdict and litigated more than 100 post-conviction relief matters.

In 2016, Mr. Francisco left the Elkhart County prosecutor's office to establish his own criminal defense firm in South Bend, Francisco Britton LLP. In 2019, he became a part-time public defender in the felony division. His private practice focuses on clients charged with murder, robbery, and burglary, as well as vehicular-related offenses, major drug offenses, sex and child-victim offenses, and racketeering cases.

Beyond the courtroom, Mr. Francisco has been a member of the Robert A. Grant Inn of Courts since 2016. He is an active member of both the St. Joseph County Bar Association, and the Elkhart City Bar Association. Since 2012, Mr. Francisco has been deeply involved with the Elkhart Kiwanis Club, serving as its president from 2021 to 2022.

In addition to his professional commitments, Mr. Franciso is active in the lives of his two young daughters and his wife. His personal interests include running and gardening.

Christopher Fronk, Esq.

Christopher Fronk, born in Sioux City, Iowa, has been a dedicated public servant for almost 27 years, serving as a deputy prosecuting attorney, first in LaPorte (1996 to 2014) and St. Joseph (2015 to present) counties, principally handling 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. Upon 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 at the LaPorte County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. He dedicated over 18 years to this role, starting with juvenile-delinquency proceedings, progressing through the full spectrum of a criminal caseload, and ultimately becoming a senior felony trial deputy specializing in homicides and major felonies.

In 2015, Mr. Fronk moved to the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office and currently serves as chief deputy prosecuting attorney. His primary responsibilities include handling all aspects of homicide prosecution as lead prosecutor and team leader of the homicide staff. Since 2015, he has successfully prosecuted approximately 90 homicide cases from the crime scene through trial and sentencing. During this time, he also tried approximately 45 homicide cases. Mr. Fronk prides himself on his experience in all aspects and nuances of major criminal trials, including the 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, even during their darkest hours. 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 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. Mr. Fronk is an avid runner and weightlifter.

Mr. Fronk is married with two sons and a daughter.

Magistrate Matthew R. Raper

Since 2021, the Honorable Matthew R. Raper has served as a magistrate in the St. Joseph Superior Court, following an extensive career as a deputy prosecuting attorney for the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's Office.

Magistrate Raper graduated in 2006 with a bachelor of arts degree in business administration, concentrating in management, from Truman State University, 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, Magistrate Raper gained practical experience as a law clerk and certified legal intern at the Green 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 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. 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, Magistrate Raper has successfully presided over one misdemeanor and two felony jury trials, including a high-profile arrest and criminal charge. Approximately 70 percent of the cases he oversees are criminal in nature.

Since July 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.

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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