

**Madison Rodgers**  
Mountrail County Clerk of Court  
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January 23, 2023

Good morning Chairwoman Larson and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Madison Rodgers and I am the Clerk of Court in Mountrail County, which is a contract county. I am here in opposition of SB 2277, which transitions contract county clerk of court offices to state employment.

This bill would be detrimental to clerk of court services in contract counties. When the State has taken over county services in the past, the county has lost control of those vital services to the public of the county. The elderly, low income and pro se litigants will be the ones who are the most negatively affected by this transition. Many from these demographics come to contract clerk of court offices every day with questions as to what to do regarding their situation and/or case. There are not always services readily available in rural counties to help them, so they look to our offices for answers. We cannot always give them the answers they want, but we can help in any way we can.

In Chief Justice Jensen's State of the Judiciary address, he said and I quote, "We also confirmed during the COVID-19 pandemic the ease with which we can move work around our judicial system. When State Office A is busy, State Office B can immediately take over part of the workload."<sup>1</sup> By moving the workload around, that would burden contract counties who may already be stretched to the limits, especially the contract counties offices that were dual offices like Clerk of Court and Recorder. When one county's work is being done by another county, especially when done in different districts and dealing with different judges, complications can ensue. Every judge likes to do things differently and I have been on the receiving end of the backlash when I have not done something a certain way the judge likes. This can make double the work for the home office when they have to fix the helping county's mistakes.

Chief Justice Jensen also said in his State of the Judiciary address and I quote, "In 2023, we can move the work to where the people are. Positions can, and will, remain local."<sup>2</sup> This is a contradictory statement. There are state clerk offices that employ staff that work remotely hundreds of miles away from their home office. How is that local? How will employing remote staff affect the public of the rural counties?

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<sup>1</sup> Chief Justice Jon Jensen, "State of the Judiciary Address", 68<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, 3 Jan. 2023, Bismarck, North Dakota.

<sup>2</sup> Chief Justice Jon Jensen, "State of the Judiciary Address", 68<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, 3 Jan. 2023, Bismarck, North Dakota.

There are many more reasons as to why I oppose this bill, many of them personal, but I only outlined the most important points. This bill would drastically affect the staff of the contract clerk offices and the public. Please give this bill a DO NOT PASS recommendation.

Along with my testimony, I am also submitting a Resolution from the Mountrail County Board of Commissioners opposing SB 2277.

I am available for any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Madison Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Madison Rodgers

Mountrail County Clerk of Court

# MOUNTRAIL COUNTY COMMISSION RESOLUTION

## RESOLUTION OPPOSING LEGISLATION MAKING MOUNTRAIL COUNTY CLERK OF COURT'S OFFICE A STATE OFFICE

WHEREAS, there is legislation being proposed pertaining to the transition of contract county clerk services to state funding and other legislative priorities; and

WHEREAS, such legislation would make the Mountrail County Clerk of Court's Office a state agency and the employees thereof state employees, which would take away local control and governance of such office and employees; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Mountrail County, North Dakota is desirous of keeping the Mountrail County Clerk of Court's Office as a county office; and

WHEREAS, Mountrail County has experienced loss of vital services in Mountrail County when the State of North Dakota takes control of county services; and

WHEREAS, the loss of services in Mountrail County to the general public and creates a hardship on the elderly, low income, and disabled individuals,


NOW THEREFORE IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR MOUNTRAIL COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA, that the following resolution be adopted as follows:

1. That the Board of County Commissioners of Mountrail County directly opposes the passage of legislation pertaining to the transition of contract county clerk services to state funding and other legislative priorities; and
2. That the Board of County Commissioners of Mountrail County resolves to keep the Mountrail County Clerk of Court's office a county office that is contracted with the State of North Dakota to providing Clerk of Court services.

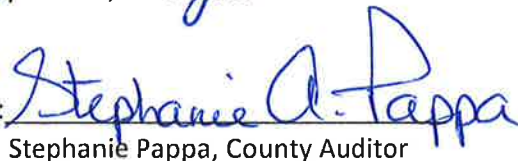
Dated at Stanley, North Dakota this 17<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2023.

MOUNTRAIL COUNTY

BY:

  
Rudy Ruland, Board Chairman

ATTEST:

  
Stephanie Pappa, County Auditor