

COUNTY JUDGES

KRISTEN D MICKEY  
JAMES M WORDEN

CLERK MAGISTRATE  
DIANNE LANA



SCOTTS BLUFF COUNTY COURT  
TWELFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

February 2, 2026

Justice John R. Freudenberg  
Nebraska Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 98910  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Judicial Resources Commission Members:

I have had the honor of serving on the county bench in Scotts Bluff County, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial District for more than 21 years. Over those 21 years I have been a witness to many changes. I handle multiple protection orders every week. A few years ago, local law enforcement decided to use blood tests when investigating driving under the influence. The blood draws often require a warrant signed by a judge in the middle of the night. I have answered that call as many as three times in one week between midnight and 3:00 a.m.

Although our juvenile case load has remained steady, with a few ups and downs, the severity of cases has increased; sexual assault and incest used to be an anomaly. Now, they appear on the docket in Scotts Bluff County with much more frequency.

After I had been on the bench just a few years, my friend Judge Camerer experienced a life changing accident and was never able to return to the bench. For approximately 12 months I was the only judge in Scotts Bluff County. The other judges in the district, and a few from outside the district assisted as they could. However, most days, I was the only judge. I received all the calls for search warrants, I did all the emergency detention hearings and handled the majority of contested cases. I took it as a personal challenge to provide the judicial services the people of Scotts Bluff County deserved. Unfortunately, good intentions don't always carry the day. I found my patience was not what it once was, both at work and with my family. It was a tremendous relief when this commission filled Judge Camerer's position.

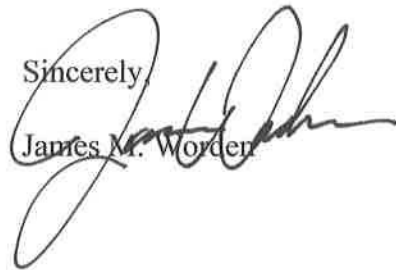
Scotts Bluff County is in a unique position geographically as well. There is only one sitting county judge less than an hour's drive and he is approximately 55 minutes. There are a total of 4 county judges within a 2-hour drive of Scotts Bluff County Court. If there is only one Judge in Scott Bluff County and that judge is, for any reason, unable to work for any unusual amount of time, the case load would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cover.

Finally, a county judge is part of the community he or she serves. Over the years I have become

familiar with the mental health providers, substance counselors, school administrators, businesses, and churches. Those relationships have helped me in matching people with solutions. It would be hard, if not impossible, for a judge to come here once a week from out of town to develop the same knowledge and relationships.

I'm sure you will have the case numbers at your disposal. It is my hope the information I have provided, when considered with the numbers, will encourage you to find Scotts Bluff County needs 2 county judges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James M. Worden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

James M. Worden