



## **Kara Krothe running for Monroe Circuit Court judge**

Jan 28, 2020

Working as a court reporter for retired Monroe Circuit Judge Douglas “Randy” Bridges got Kara Krothe interested in becoming an attorney. So she got a law degree from Indiana University’s School of Law, and has been a public defender the past 15 years.

And now, she’s seeking the Democratic Party’s nomination for the Monroe Circuit Judge seat currently held by Republican Judith Benckart, who was appointed to the seat by the governor after Judge Kenneth Todd retired in October 2018.

Krothe stated in a news release that she is running for judge because of a belief that her experience and integrity lend themselves to upholding the law in a fair and impartial manner. She has represented indigent clients in felony, misdemeanor and juvenile cases.

Despite handling large caseloads, she strives to treat all clients fairly and with compassion. “People ask me how I can defend people that are accused of crimes. My answer is everyone is presumed innocent and is afforded a competent defense, and when you sit down and talk to clients you realize that they are people just like you but because of circumstances, such as substance use disorder or mental challenges that may or may not have been under their control, they still need my help.”

Krothe has worked seven years as part of the Monroe County Drug Treatment Court team and believes in the positive impact problem solving courts can have on its participants and the community.

Krothe graduated from Bloomington High School North, received a bachelor’s degree in government from Smith College in 1992 and then worked at the Monroe County Voter Registration Office and clerk’s office. After getting her law degree in 2000, she worked three years in private practice before joining the public defender’s office.

Krothe said her 19 years of experience in court will help make the courtroom less intimidating and more responsive for victims of crime, the accused, attorneys and other participants in cases that would come before her as judge.

For more information, contact Krothe at [karakrotheforjudge@gmail.com](mailto:karakrotheforjudge@gmail.com).

Anyone seeking or holding public office, particularly when that office is Monroe County Judge, has a responsibility to exercise sound judgment. In that spirit, I have directed our campaign effort to cease in-person campaigning over concerns relating to the COVID-19 pandemic until at least March 23rd, when we will reassess conditions based on advice from our community health experts.

For the time being, Kara Krothe for Judge, will be a virtual and mail-only campaign. Our first priority is the health of our Monroe County citizens. Starting today, we will be reaching out to voters via social media, personal notes, neighbor-to-neighbor texting, and literature drops. You can like Kara Krothe for Judge on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, or visit <https://karakrotheforjudge.com> to sign up to receive updates on what we are doing and how you can be involved.

On a personal level, I share your concerns about all that is happening with health and economic news. It is disconcerting to be living with so much uncertainty, but I am confident in the spirit of our neighbors, to work together, and get through these times together.

Sincerely,  
Kara

Kara  
**Krothe**  
For Judge

## Letters To The Editor

### Letter: Endorses Krothe for judge

**April 3, 2020**

To the editor:

I strongly endorse Kara Krothe in her candidacy for judgeship in Monroe County Circuit Court, Division 8, Seat 5. A longtime friend of her parents, I've known Kara for most of her life, and watched her mature from childhood into a wonderful, strong woman and accomplished legal professional. With almost two decades of courtroom experience, and as an extraordinary person, she will bring a deep understanding, objectivity and respect for all sides to the bench.

Put simply, if I ever come before a judge I would want it to be one like Kara.

Susan Wunder

Bloomington

## Articles and Press Releases:

### **Judge candidates talk jail overcrowding, racial justice as part of forum**

**March 10, 2020 - Herald Times**

Jail overcrowding and racial justice issues were some of the questions Democratic candidates seeking their party's nomination for one of two judge seats this election faced at a forum on Monday.

Judge candidates Geoff Bradley, Alphonso Manns, Jeff Kehr and Kara Krothe were the four candidates taking part in a forum hosted by the Democracy for Monroe County forum in the auditorium of the Monroe County Public Library.

Bradley and Manns are seeking the Democratic nomination for Monroe Circuit Court Judge, Seat 9 to replace incumbent Elizabeth Cure, who is retiring. [Kehr and Krothe are seeking the Democratic nomination for Monroe Circuit Court Judge, Seat 5. Republican Judith Benckart is the incumbent for that seat and she is running to retain it.](#)

#### **Racial justice:**

[As a public defender, Krothe said she has seen how racial and socioeconomic biases impact her clients. She said judges need to be aware of implicit bias within themselves and their staffs. She added to overcome those implicit biases, they should engage in additional training.](#)

Kehr agreed that implicit bias training is one way to address racial issues in the court system. He said as a Monroe County deputy prosecutor he has undergone that training, adding it was a priority for Monroe County Prosecutor Erika Oliphant that all prosecutors in the local system experience it.

However, he said that is only the beginning. Kehr said there is still a lot more work to be done. He said prosecutors are ministers of justice, which means they are in the best position to make sure justice is done and that individuals are being prosecuted based on what they have done and not who they are. He added as a prosecutor that is something he practices every day when he screens charges.

Manns said Bloomington is quite progressive community compared with others across the state but acknowledged there are still some racial issues. He said as a judge the key thing is to abide by the rules and ethics of the court. He added there are designed to help judges avoid discrimination

within the court system, once understood and applied appropriately.

Bradley said judges are asked to be fair and unbiased in their decision-making. He said addressing

racial justice in a courtroom also involves assessing what information judges receive from different sources. He said judges have to make sure they have all necessary information to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and the outcomes are not based on any bias.

#### **Jail overcrowding:**

Manns said the problems contributing to jail overcrowding go far beyond the crime. He added those entering the criminal justice system often are dealing with other issues, such as drugs, mental health problems and homelessness.

Manns said judges have to keep public safety in mind when deciding whether to incarcerate someone. He thinks violent offenders should be incarcerated while nonviolent ones can be evaluated, released and have the opportunity to rehabilitate themselves.

Bradley said he is interested in the results of a comprehensive review of Monroe County's

criminal justice system. He expects judges to review that report and talk to county officials about what the most effective options might be to address jail overcrowding going forward. In addition to examining the study's findings, Bradley said Monroe has been fortunate to be one of the pilot pre-trial release program counties as a way to reduce recidivism. He added he supports this program and others like the Monroe County problem-solving courts. Kehr said he also is awaiting the results of the study and thinks the pre-trial release program has been helpful in keeping the jail population down. He said in addressing jail overcrowding judges need to not incarcerate low-level offenders.

Krothe said one thing the pre-trial release program has done is eliminate the need for monetary bail. Before the program was launched, she said, individuals would sit in jail for months because they didn't have the money to bond out. She said some clients have pleaded guilty just to get out. She added statistics show that spending more than six days in jail can be detrimental to one's life and lead to a downward spiral.

**Alternatives to incarceration:**

Kehr said he supports local efforts to have a crisis diversion center.

He said as part of the program if a law enforcement officer encounters someone on the street in crisis, they have the option to take them to the crisis diversion center instead of jail. At the center, the individual would be connected with mental health and substance abuse professionals who can hopefully help them with immediate issues and build relationships over time to address other needs. He said this would help divert individuals from the jail who don't need to be there.

Manns said Bloomington already has a number of alternatives to incarceration that can be helpful to those willing to participate.

He said he would like to see more youth education about the difficulties they might face if they start using drugs. For example, he said many people think marijuana is not harmful, but taken over a long period of time he thinks it can be.

"I know people don't want to hear that," Manns said.

He said he is concerned about drug usage throughout the community and its impact on the jail in terms of housing drug offenders. He said officials need to work with services in the community

to find alternatives to help those with drug problems.

Bradley said when it comes to looking at alternatives to incarceration he thinks it goes back to discussions about the pre-trial release program and what the community is willing to do support and maintain such a program based on what the evidence is informing officials. He added judges are also looking for new opportunities to address things the community is facing.

Krothe said she does not think those who commit nonviolent misdemeanors and some Level 6 felonies should be incarcerated. As for alternatives to incarceration, she said the county has had some success with its pre-trial release program and problem-solving courts.

In addition, she said she would like to see the creation of a restorative justice problem-solving court. She described such a court as one designed to help individuals 18 to 24.

"The idea is that they get into that court and they not be saddled with a felony for the rest of their life," Krothe said.

She said when someone has a felony it is difficult to get work, housing and that individual starts out adult life at a deficit. She added that is one idea she would like to see implemented if elected.

Candidates for Monroe County Council also spoke at Monday night's forum after the H-T's deadline. A story about them will appear later this week.

Tonight, candidates for Indiana Senate District 40 and Indiana's 9th Congressional District

will speak at a 6:30 p.m. Democracy for Monroe County forum at the Monroe County Public Library auditorium.