



GENTNER DRUMMOND
ATTORNEY GENERAL

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Letter of support for Trevor S. Pemberton to be a district judge on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Oklahoma

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Durbin:

We, the undersigned Attorneys General of eleven States, write to express our strong support for the nomination of Trevor S. Pemberton to serve as a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Oklahoma. Judge Pemberton has served on both the trial and appellate benches of his State, has advised Oklahoma's executive branch at its highest level, and has practiced in the areas of law that figure most prominently on the Eastern District's docket. He is exceptionally well qualified for this seat, and he is prepared to assume it on day one.

Trevor Pemberton earned his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Oklahoma in 2005 and his Juris Doctor, cum laude, from the Oklahoma City University School of Law in 2008. He held Merit and Dean's scholarships, was twice named Merit Scholar of the Year, and competed in the American College of Trial Lawyers National Trial Competition. He then spent nine years in private practice, beginning at Foliart, Huff, Ottaway & Bottom and continuing for seven years as the sole shareholder of his own firm. His practice was almost entirely litigation, and he was in court constantly: medical malpractice defense, commercial disputes, probate and trust contests, construction and surety matters, collections, and family law. His peers rated him AV Preeminent by Martindale-Hubbell, the highest rating for legal ability and ethical standards, and Oklahoma Super Lawyers named him a Rising Star in each of his last six years in practice.

Judge Pemberton's judicial career began with the confidence of his peers. In May 2017, the district judges of Oklahoma County selected him to serve as a Special District Judge. In January 2018, Governor Mary Fallin appointed him a District Judge for Oklahoma County, the State's most populous county. Governor Fallin said he had exhibited the highest standards of professionalism, preparedness, and respect for the legal profession, and that his temperament

served him well in working with litigants, attorneys, and other judges. Beginning in May 2019, he served as Chief Judge of the Oklahoma County Juvenile Division. On the district bench he carried civil, criminal, juvenile, and domestic dockets and took roughly sixty-nine cases through verdict or judgment, better than a third of them to a jury. In August 2020, Governor J. Kevin Stitt appointed him to the Oklahoma Court of Civil Appeals. There he authored more than sixty majority opinions in barely more than a year on the court, along with six separate writings. Few nominees arrive at the federal bench having served as both a trial judge and an appellate judge. Judge Pemberton has done both. He has managed a heavy docket, ruled from the bench with parties in front of him, and then reviewed the judgments of other trial courts on appeal. He knows what it takes to move cases fairly and promptly, and he knows how a trial record reads when it reaches a reviewing court.

In October 2021, Judge Pemberton left his appellate position to serve as General Counsel to the Governor of Oklahoma, a post he held for more than three years, until late 2024. In announcing the appointment, Governor Stitt noted that Judge Pemberton was giving up what was essentially a lifetime appointment in order to take it. He served as the Governor's principal litigation counsel, argued before the Oklahoma Supreme Court, advised cabinet secretaries and agency heads across the range of the State's legal and policy work, managed a team of attorneys, and oversaw the clemency process and administrative rule review. Those of us who lead state legal offices know what that work demands. It requires sound judgment under time pressure, discretion, and a firm grasp of the constitutional structure within which state and federal authority each operate.

Judge Pemberton now leads the Pemberton Law Group, where his practice focuses on appellate advocacy, mediation, and matters involving government and public law. About half of that practice is litigation in the appellate and district courts, and he mediates a wide range of complex civil disputes, from healthcare arbitrations and trust contests to federal insurance coverage and commercial cases. He has taught civil pretrial litigation as an adjunct professor at his law school. In April 2026, Governor Stitt appointed him to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, and the Oklahoma Senate confirmed him unanimously.

Judge Pemberton's approach to judging is straightforward. On taking the appellate bench, he committed himself to a strict and even application of the law as written, and his record reflects exactly that. Of the more than sixty majority opinions he authored on the Court of Civil Appeals, the Oklahoma Supreme Court disturbed one. He decides cases on the text before him and the record the parties make, not on his own preferences, and he does so with the patience and evenhandedness that litigants are entitled to expect from a federal district judge. The States appear constantly in the federal district courts, defending duly enacted laws and enforcing our own. We have a direct interest in seeing those courts staffed by judges who read statutes as they are written and who decide cases promptly.

This vacancy also warrants prompt attention. Judge Ronald A. White assumed senior status on January 27, 2026, and the seat has stood open since. The one remaining active judge, Chief Judge John F. Heil III, holds commissions in all three Oklahoma districts and serves as chief judge of two of them. Meanwhile the demands on the court have grown sharply. Following *McGirt v. Oklahoma*, 591 U.S. 894 (2020), criminal filings in the Eastern District rose by more than 400 percent between 2020 and 2021. This vacancy requires a judge equipped to carry that load from the first day. Judge Pemberton is that person.

Judge Pemberton's judicial experience, his service to his State, and his demonstrated fidelity to the law as written make him an outstanding candidate for this seat. Oklahoma's Attorney General has faced him as opposing counsel, and does not hesitate to say that he litigates with candor, preparation, and complete fidelity to his client and to the court. We respectfully urge the Committee to act favorably on his nomination, and we thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

A blue ink signature of Gentner Drummond, featuring a stylized 'G' and 'D'.

Gentner Drummond
Attorney General of Oklahoma

A blue ink signature of Steve Marshall, written in a cursive style.

Steve Marshall
Attorney General of Alabama

A blue ink signature of Tim Griffin, written in a cursive style.

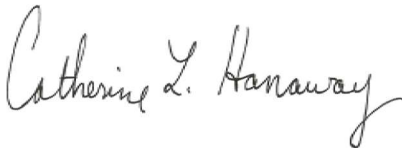
Tim Griffin
Attorney General of Arkansas

A black ink signature of Brenna Bird, written in a cursive style.

Brenna Bird
Attorney General of Iowa

A black ink signature of Lynn Fitch, written in a cursive style.

Lynn Fitch
Attorney General of Mississippi

A black ink signature of Catherine L. Hanaway, written in a cursive style.

Catherine Hanaway
Attorney General of Missouri

A blue ink signature of Mike Hilgers, written in a cursive style.

Mike Hilgers
Attorney General of Nebraska

A blue ink signature of Andy Wilson, written in a cursive style.

Andy Wilson
Attorney General of Ohio

A black ink signature of Alan Wilson, written in a cursive style.

Alan Wilson
Attorney General of South Carolina

A black ink signature of Marty Jackley, written in a cursive style.

Marty Jackley
Attorney General of South Dakota

A black ink signature of Ken Paxton, written in a cursive style.

Ken Paxton
Attorney General of Texas