



April 1, 2026

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Justin D. Smith for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit

Dear Chairman Grassley and Ranking Member Durbin:

“Argue with you?” Justin asked standing on the other side of my desk at MU Law where he was enrolled in my Family Violence Clinic and Course. “Yes, prove I’m wrong.” Always prepared, Justin immediately began critiquing some adult abuse case plan. Whip smart, adventurous, and driven to serve, Justin was a natural going to bat for indigent abuse victims in unpredictable rural courts. At that time, many judges, prosecutors, and law enforcers resisted both holding abusers responsible and applying Missouri’s abuse remedies for victims. They routinely left abuse to the privacy of the family which did nothing to stop the abuse. Bucking that tradition required Justin to stand his ground, make offers of proof, and insist upon the full remedies of the law. That takes grit and Justin has it.

Justin’s pursuit of justice did not end in rural courtrooms. He worked with two other students drafting an investigation of child fatality reporting vis a vis household abuse. They divvied up the workload, obtained Institutional Review Board approval, and consulted Missouri University statisticians. He and his co-authors published their article in the Missouri Bar Journal which goes to every lawyer in the state. (The MO Bar Journal required a licensed attorney to coauthor so my name was added.) The expose changed the way Missouri compiled, investigated, and prosecuted child homicides. I see from his resume that Justin has continued writing and publishing after law school. No surprise there.

As law school was ending, Justin volunteered as campaign manager for another 3L who decided to run for prosecutor in southern Missouri. While unsuccessful, the experience inevitably taught both men a lot about election compliance and politics while dipping their toes in community service.

Justin quit a lucrative big firm job to work for Missouri's Governor Greitens and in that role, he recruited me and my students. First Lady Sheena Greitens sought to expedite permanency for the state's foster children. Justin wanted me and my students to help gather Child Protective Services players from around the state to meet with Sheena, help develop strategic plans, write whatever laws would serve, introduce them in the legislature, and testify if necessary. Governor Greitens signed those bills into law before he abruptly left office. Justin was behind the whole thing. Those laws will forever change the futures of Missouri's foster kids.

Also, while serving as the governor's counsel, Justin discovered that the previous governor had left boxes of unopened clemency requests. I had a law student who herself had received clemency for killing her father when he stopped raping her and started in on her younger sister. She knew the clemency system thoroughly and was/is devoted to public service and criminal law. I suggested her to deal with the clemency requests. Justin recommended her to the governor and stood up for her to sort through those boxes. She ended up triaging all those clemency requests in what has to be one of Missouri's most unique odysseys. Justin is 100% responsible for effectively managing those backed up requests and helping to legitimize my student's journey through law school.

Truly, I knew I'd write a letter like this someday. Justin was a stand-out early on. Home schooled and conservative, he works with quiet resolve and is unselfconsciously comfortable and amiable with colleagues, judges, and legislators of all backgrounds and any stripe. He is a closer whom I knew would shepherd any project to conclusion engendering respect and goodwill in the process.

One can never be sorry for involving Justin Smith in anything. He would make a perfect judge.

Sincerely,



Mary Beck RN MSN JD
Emerita Clinical Professor of Law
University of Missouri School of Law