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May 23, 2016

Dear Chairman Dreher, Vice-Chairman Copenhaver, and Commissioner Gussiaas:

As you are aware, when I was appointed by Judge Hovey in January to take over as State's Attorney for Foster County, my appointment was made temporarily "until such time as the County may hire a qualified permanent replacement." When I agreed to take over this position, it was because Foster County had an emergency and needed someone to help them out immediately. On numerous occasions, I informed the County that I was not able to keep this position long-term (as I am a permanent resident of Eddy County) and that they should advertise the position with the UND School of Law, State Bar Association, and on the Supreme Court's Website.

I felt that when I accepted this appointment, I was doing a service to the County, but I no longer feel I am able to continue in this capacity. In light of the recent letters to the editor and advertisements being placed in the Foster County Independent by both Mr. Murphy and his family, as well other residents and County employees, I do not feel I can continue in this position any longer. The statements being made by both sides, I believe, are inappropriate to some extent and I am starting to get caught in the cross-fires. With these recent attacks, I feel like my name and reputation are being harmed as associated with Paul and the County's fight.

In light of Mr. Murphy's petition to have his name put on the upcoming ballot, it appears that he now wishes to serve as State's Attorney again. As I have shared on a few occasions, it is my legal opinion that Mr. Murphy should not be petitioning for State's Attorney as the vacancy he left is still open and needs to be filled by a "qualified permanent replacement" and elector of Foster County (again, for which I am not).

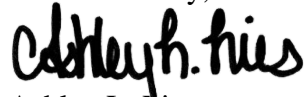
I know this is a difficult issue for the Commission, and I have not made this decision lightly; however, I do take my reputation and ethics very seriously and I am not willing to, again, get caught in the cross-fires of this fight.

With that in mind, I also understand that the Commission cannot find a replacement immediately, so I am willing to attend June 7th's Commission meeting with the research I have promised, as well as to prosecute the matters set for June 14th's Master Calendar. I would recommend the Board either re-hire Mr. Murphy as the only qualified, willing replacement, or contact the Attorney General for assistance with this vacancy. I would remind you that June 22nd is another Master Calendar date in Foster County.

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I thank you for your time in reading this and offer my sympathies for the situation this leaves you. I appreciate the opportunity you gave me and the trust you placed in me to fill this vacancy temporarily, as well as your understanding that I can no longer be involved for the reasons set forth herein.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ashley L. Lies". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ashley L. Lies
Attorney at Law

cc: Judge Hovey
Tami Beckley