

The Des Moines Register

DESMOINESREGISTER.COM

February 1, 2013

Iowa woman nominated for 8th Circuit

Four groups call for Jane Kelly to be confirmed quickly.

By Jeff Eckhoff
| jeckhoff@dmreg.com

President Barack Obama has nominated an Iowa federal public defender to fill a vacant spot on the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Jane Kelly, an assistant federal public defender in the U.S. Northern District of Iowa since 1994, has been the supervising attorney in the Cedar Rapids office since 1999. If confirmed by the Senate, she would become the second woman to ever sit on the federal court bench that hears appeals from Iowa.

Obama, who also nominated Wyoming Attorney General Gregory Alan Phillips to fill a spot on the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, praised both individuals for “their ability, integrity and independence.”

Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin issued a statement saying Kelly “has spent her career working on behalf of the most underprivileged in society and has fought tirelessly to ensure the rights of all Iowans are protected. She has a reputation as an extremely talented lawyer with a great sense of compassion and fairness. It was a privilege to recommend her to the White House and, now that she has been formally nominated, an honor on behalf of Iowans.”

Hours after the nomination was announced, four Iowa nonprofit organizations — One Iowa, Working Families Win, Iowa Citizen Action Network and Progress Iowa — issued joint statements calling for Kelly’s quick confirmation. Some wanted it quicker than others.

“It’s time for Senator Grassley and the Senate Judiciary Committee to stop playing politics with our courts and move the nomination of Jane Kelly forward,” said the statement from Progress Iowa Executive Director Matt Sinovic. “Any further delay will result in justice denied, and Iowans deserve better from their elected leaders.”

Kelly, who was born in Indiana and obtained her legal degree from Harvard University in 1991, also has served as a law clerk in both the U.S. District Court of South Dakota and on the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Hers was one of two names submitted to Obama. The other was Mary Tabor, who has served since May 2010 as a judge on the Iowa Court of Appeals.

According to a website for the Infinity Project at the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, 61 judges in history have served the federal 8th Circuit (counting three who served before Congress officially established the court). One has been a woman — Diana Murphy of Minnesota, appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1994. Clinton also nominated Bonnie Campbell of Iowa, but she was not confirmed by the Senate.
