

**Geoff Bradley, Democratic Candidate for Monroe County Circuit Court Division 1**  
**Responses to questions from the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce**  
**For the Nov. 3, 2020 General Election**

- 1. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the way that the court system is handling its work. In some ways, the period offers an opportunity to reset. Are there any changes to the circuit court system that you'd support post-pandemic? How would you advocate to implement those changes?**
- 2. Monroe County government has undertaken a criminal justice study. What changes to the current system do you support, and why?**

As Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush said in 2019, “[W]hat we do have is a constitutional charge to provide open, accessible and fair courts. That is achieved only when we place litigants, victims, witnesses, jurors—all court customers—at the center of every equation, just as our courthouses are at the center of every community.”

While the actual length and impact of COVID-19 is still unknown, we have an opportunity to identify the strengths and gaps in the services provided by the court system during the pandemic. In formulating our response we will need to follow the COVID-19 guidelines outlined by the Indiana Supreme Court, utilize the results of the criminal justice study, and solicit input from the medical professionals, state and local agencies, and organizations impacted by COVID-19.

When considering the implementation of any changes, it is important to note that the Monroe County Circuit Courts are unified in one body. The Board of Judges works in concert to make policy decisions and review operations of the court system to maintain consistency in each court. Also, 74% of the courts’ budget is provided by the County Council and the County Commissioners oversee the facilities utilized by the courts. It is important for all stakeholders to collaborate to identify programs, services and approaches that will allow Monroe County to adapt and respond to its evolving needs to ensure a fair, equitable and effective system.

- 3. What are the top challenges facing Monroe County Circuit Court, and how do you propose addressing those challenges?**

- a. Preserving and enhancing everyone’s access to the judicial system.**

While many people might normally associate the court system with addressing criminal matters, the court system impacts the community in a diverse and wide range of matters such as adoptions, divorces, child-custody matters, contracts, housing, employment disputes and zoning.

The court system must act in a fair and efficient manner so that parties have attainable and equal court access. As United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, “We must never forget that the only real source of power that we as judges can tap is the

respect of the people.” It is therefore important that we continue work to earn the faith, confidence, and acceptance of the community with the court system.

Access to the court system begins with an efficiently managed and organized Court. Much of a judge’s role is creating an effective system for the administrative affairs of the court. I would seek to remove barriers for all customers of the court to ensure the speedy delivery of justice and an efficient court system for all of Monroe County. I am devoted to preserving and furthering the investments, modernizations, and innovations of the Monroe County Circuit Court. I would support and work with members of the Board of Judges to continue current support and identify new options.

**b. Evolving and adapting to the needs of individuals and families in the community, including addressing mental health and substance use disorder issues.**

It is important for the civil and criminal system to be willing to assess and evolve to meet the needs, welfare, and safety of our community. The issues impact all aspects of the justice system in civil and criminal proceedings from infants to our senior citizens. Monroe County has demonstrated a willingness to identify and utilize new and modern ideas through a variety of initiatives and programs such as the Family Court, Counsel in the Court, Pretrial Release Program, and the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. Monroe County has been at the leading edge in the state in developing alternative Problem-Solving Courts, such as our Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Reentry Court and Veteran’s Court. I would continue to support the initiatives developed by the Problem-Solving Courts, the Substance Use Disorder Community Awareness Commission and other community partners working to expand programs and services.