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## **(Neb.)-State To Determine Whether Panhandle Retains Fifth Judge**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 05/23/2012 07:41 PM

(REGIONAL)-With the retirement of Judge Charles Plantz of Rushville, comes an uncertain future for the 12<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> judicial districts. The 8<sup>th</sup> judicial district currently covers 15 counties, spanning from Howard County down near Grand Island up to the South Dakota border and across to Cherry County. The 12<sup>th</sup> district covers all 11 counties of the Panhandle and Grant County.

Twelfth district judge Russ Harford visited the Dawes County Commissioners on Wednesday. He explained to the commissioners that the state is currently determining whether or not they will replace Plantz in the 12<sup>th</sup> district, or if they will restructure the system and give the position to the Omaha area, which is in need of another juvenile judge.

Harford said statistics say 4.56 judges are needed for the 12<sup>th</sup> district based on demand, and it currently has five. The state is contemplating restructuring the 8<sup>th</sup> district to include Sheridan and Grant Counties, lessening the load of the 12<sup>th</sup> district, but then not replacing their judge. This makes some people upset. City attorney Adam Edmund said the situation does not personally impact him, but it's the principle at stake that bothers him. He feels it is just another way that eastern Nebraska is slowly draining resources from our end of the state. "It's a continuing systematic erosion, a battle of east against west," he said.

Commissioner Stacy Swinney said the county does not want to lose another local judge either. "We don't want to lose that judgeship in Rushville," said Swinney. "And there'll be a time to testify coming up June 5<sup>th</sup> that we will, as a board, express our concern about losing that judgeship in our Panhandle."

Edmund said the local Bar Association will also present a statement at the upcoming hearing in June. Harford said that either way, whether redistricting or replacing Plantz, will relieve the caseload of judges in the 12<sup>th</sup> district, but the hearing will be a way for locals to let Lincoln know "they are tired of the eastern part of the state poaching from the western part."

(Questions? Comments? E-mail [roxie@chadrad.com](mailto:roxie@chadrad.com).)

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