

## *New Judge Profile*

### **Joanne Kibodeaux**

*Ada County Magistrate Judge  
Fourth Judicial District*



*January 30, 2015*

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Meet Joanne Kibodeaux, Magistrate Judge for Ada County!

Joanne Kibodeaux was appointed Magistrate Judge for Ada County on the family law calendar to replace retiring judge David Day effective October 1, 2013. Her journey to an Idaho bench began in Detroit, Michigan, where she was born Joanne Buchin in Harper Hospital in 1961. She grew up within the city limits of Detroit, where her father worked for the city and her mother was a school teacher. While she was privileged to attend a magnet high school known as [Cass Tech](#) with kids from all parts of the city, she grew up in a time of racial tensions, including the riots of 1967, which were still the topic of frequent discussion and debate when she was in high school. After high school, Joanne obtained a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in anthropology from the University of Michigan in 1983.

After graduating from college, Joanne moved west to Boulder, Colorado to escape the violence of life in Detroit and to find a better way to live. She then moved to Laramie, Wyoming where her former husband had a job opportunity. Judge Kibodeaux wanted to obtain a master's degree in library science with an emphasis in law, but the University of Wyoming in Laramie did not have such a program, so Joanne took the LSAT, thinking it might be an interesting endeavor to study law. She earned her Juris Doctor degree from the University of Wyoming in 1988.

Joanne moved to Boise after obtaining her law degree and worked as a legal aid attorney until 1995. From 1995 until 2000, she did a variety of things, including having a private law practices, working as a contract attorney for the Valley Crisis Center, working as a case manager with the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, and being an adjunct professor at BSU in the paralegal program. From 2000 until she was appointed to the bench, she had a solo law practice concentrating in family law, social security disability and bankruptcy.

Judge Kibodeaux has given much of her time to social justice causes and programs to improve the community and her profession. She is past chair of several organizations including the Idaho Women Lawyers, Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, and Idaho Women's Network. She is also a former board member of United Vision for Idaho, Ada County Abuse Prevention Program. It is no surprise, then, that one of Judge Kibodeaux's largest challenges in the transition to the bench is learning to keep her opinions about such things as politics to herself in social settings. In addition her involvement in community programs, Joanne has also been an active member of the Idaho State Bar. She was chair of

the Bar's Family Law Section from 2012 to 2013 and was one of the six-member working group that developed the Idaho Rules of Family Law Procedure from 2008 to 2013.

Given Joanne's history of leadership and activism as an attorney, one may wonder what she might have done had her path not led to the bar and now the bench. Why, she would have been a baker, of course! In her words, "If I had it to do all over again, I would have gone with my high school aspiration to attend Le Cordon Bleu to be a pastry chef."

When asked about challenges on the bench, Judge Kibodeaux spoke of being asked to make difficult, often heart-wrenching decisions on a daily basis. As a family law attorney, her job was to present her client's position and then put it in the hands of the judge. Now, presiding over a family law docket means that she is the one who makes these significant decisions that affect the lives of parents and their children.

Joanne identifies a number of people whom she has admired, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Elie Wiesel, Susan B. Anthony, and Eleanor Roosevelt. She also acknowledges her mother, who, widowed at a young age, was left to raise Joanne and her brother on her own, while obtaining a college education and going on to have a career from which she was able to retire. But Joanne also admires her two daughters, Meg, a social worker in Louisiana, and Rachel, a senior at BSU. She says one of the best things that ever happened to her was when she realized that both her daughters had surpassed her in both intelligence and talents. Her favorite quote is from Albert Einstein, who said, "In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same."

Joanne enjoys reading in her spare time and loves having a stack of books on her nightstand. She also enjoys starting her container gardens in the spring. In the fall, she is occupied canning tomatoes and applesauce and in winter she finds herself obsessed with knitting and quilting. During the summer, a favorite pastime is traveling to national campgrounds with her husband, Rand. Joanne also enjoys movies and most recently saw *Interstellar* with her younger daughter. While she thought it could use some additional editing, it led to interesting discussions about how many dimensions really exist and life after death.

Judge Kibodeaux says that leaving Detroit and heading west was the very best thing she ever did for herself; still, her hometown remains one of her favorite places to visit. She still has many childhood friends there, as well as extended family members. Acknowledging the bad reputation of Detroit, Joanne notes that there are still amazing things, such as its stellar [art museum](#), [zoo](#), [Fisher Theater](#), fabulous restaurants, and other places she frequented while growing up. When she is not homesick for Detroit, she also enjoys visiting the Oregon coast. On her "bucket list" is visiting the Westminster Dog Show at Madison Square Garden.

Welcome, Judge Kibodeaux!