

Judges Threlkeld and Sholar Intervene In Redistricting Case

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EDWARDSVILLE - On February 8, Edwardsville attorney James Craney entered his appearance on behalf of Madison County Circuit Judges Sholar and Threlkeld in the lawsuit pitting the voters of Madison County against various state bodies. The suit alleges that the Judicial Circuits Districting Act of 2022 is unconstitutional in its application and unfairly prejudices Madison County voters and judicial candidates.



Judges Sholar and Threlkeld have intervened in the suit as plaintiffs. Speaker of the House Chris Welch and Senate President Dan Harmon has also intervened as defendants in this rare contest pitting the Illinois judiciary against the legislature. Welch and Harmon are represented by long-time Madigan attorney, Michael Kasper.

When asked about the intervention, Craney stated “I don’t usually comment on pending cases, but in this instance I’ll make an exception, to call attention to the cynical, Chicago-machine style attempt to prevent these judges to run for the seats for which they have already declared their candidacy. It also disenfranchises many Madison County voters from voting for judges who may ultimately rule on their own cases. If this naked political interference by the legislature into the judiciary is allowed to stand, it sets a dangerous precedent for the future.”



In 2021, Sholar and Threlkeld declared their intentions to run for full-term seats on the Circuit Court, where they currently serve. In January 2022, the Illinois legislature drew first-of-their-kind boundaries in Madison County which established three subcircuits, or smaller elective districts, where the candidates must reside and from which they must be elected. Only the voters from one particular subcircuit will elect Madison County judges in these two races, leaving two-thirds of the County ineligible to vote for a judge, or remove a judge, that may one day hear their case. Records indicate Sholar was drawn out of the subcircuit by about eight thousand feet, and Threlkeld, by just over two thousand feet. In order to remain in the race, both of the judges were forced to uproot their lives within days, and take up residence within the new subcircuit.

“The fact that sitting judges have intervened as litigants should serve as a wake-up call for anyone interested in the Illinois justice system”, said Craney. “The legislature changed the rules of the game for them at the eleventh hour, with no notice. In a matter of a few days, they were forced to uproot their lives, and move into a new district to try to keep their jobs. And, the boundaries of those new districts were still not clearly defined. Residents should take notice that they have chosen to be involved in litigation, at the same time that they are running campaigns under these new, unfair rules. It shows their dedication, and the importance of this issue to all of us.”

Trial is set for February 24 in Sangamon County Circuit Court.