


MINNESOTA DISTRICT
JUDGES ASSOCIATION
MDJA

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Mr. Tony Webster


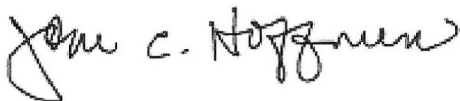
Dear Mr. Webster,

Thank you for your detailed comments and suggestions in your letter delivered to me on or about April 8, 2021. Please accept my apologies for the delay in this response. As you can probably imagine, much of the work of district court judges is currently being conducted remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which often takes us substantially longer than pre-Covid court proceedings did. Consequently, there has been limited time for me to address matters outside the routine matters of court business.

I am the current President of the Minnesota District Judges Association ("MDJA"). The MDJA is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization. It is a professional association in which membership is voluntary and is extended to active and retired district and appellate judges in the State of Minnesota. The Jury Instruction Guides (JIGs) are the result of the substantial work of a subcommittee of the MDJA that is comprised of volunteer active and retired judges. The JIGs are not mandatory for district judges to use in the preparation of their instructions and comments to jurors in civil and criminal trials. The appellate courts of this State have repeatedly commented in case law over the years that the JIGs (both Civil and Criminal) produced by the MDJA are not binding precedent on the appellate courts of this State nor are they necessarily a correct statement of the law in Minnesota. District Court trial judges, however, routinely use the JIGS to instruct a jury as to how the law in Minnesota is to be applied by jurors in reaching their verdict. While the JIGS serve as a guide to the trial court judges in this State, each judge has the individual discretion to instruct a jury in any manner that the judge deems appropriate.

On the other legal matters raised in the questions you presented, I am not in a position to provide legal advice to you and I hesitate to do so. You should seek your own counsel concerning the questions you have raised.

Sincerely,



Judge John Hoffman
President, Minnesota District Judges Association

CC: Jeff Shorba, State Court Administrator