



Robert G. Montgomery, Judge

Franklin County Probate Court

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2015

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PROBATE JUDGE MONTGOMERY CREATES THE STATE'S FIRST PUBLIC GUARDIAN

Columbus, Ohio – Franklin County Probate Judge Robert G. Montgomery today assigned four wards to guardianship under the newly created Franklin County Guardianship Service Board. The assigning of indigent wards to the Board represents a first of its kind pilot program for a “Public Guardian” in the State of Ohio. It represents a shift from an attorney-based system to a social services model. The Board is funded without the imposition of any new taxes.

The enabling legislation for the Board’s charter was originally proposed to the legislature in 2012 by Judge Montgomery. The Ohio General Assembly adopted House Bill 483 in June of 2014 which contained the language to ensure the care and treatment of vulnerable indigent people in Franklin County. The Board consists of three citizens, one appointed by the Franklin County Probate Judge Montgomery (Larry H. James), one appointed by the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board (Jane Higgins Marx) and one appointed by the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities (Frank E. New). The Board’s Executive Director is Jack R. Kullman, Jr., an attorney and the retired court administrator of the Franklin County Court of Appeals.

Judge Montgomery said: “This Board solves the two biggest concerns with current indigent guardianships. First, how do we find suitable guardians, and second, how do we pay for them?” The Board has collaborative financial arrangements between the ADAMH Board, the Board of DD and the Franklin County Probate Court. It has been able to provide its services based on the three agency’s existing funding sources, without any new taxes or additional appropriations. Further, the legislation allows for private sector financial support of the Board, which has also received help from the Franklin County Commissioners. The Judge said: “As we move this process forward to serve more people, I’m looking forward to partnering with the educational, philanthropic and social services communities to continue providing care and treatment for the indigent mentally ill and developmentally disabled in Franklin County. This is a classic public-public and public-private partnership.”

The Judge continued: “This innovative solution would not have been possible without the leadership of ADAMH Board’s CEO David Royer, the Board of DD Superintendent Jed Morison, and the significant support of the Franklin County Commissioners.” As the Guardianship Service Board staffs up and continues operations, the goal of the Court is to assign additional wards to that Board for supervision.

Judge Montgomery was elected Probate Judge in 2010 and re-elected in 2014. He is on the executive committee and is an officer of the Ohio Probate Judges’ Association, including serving on the Probate Law and Procedure Committee. Judge Montgomery is a member of the National College of Probate Judges, the Ohio State Bar Association, and the Columbus Bar Association. A native of McComb, Ohio, in Hancock County, he is a graduate of Bowling Green State University and Capital University Law School.