

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2014

DEPUTY CORONER ASKED TO RESIGN TO COMPLY WITH ETHICS ORDINANCE

Nelson County Coroner Field Houghlin announced today that he has requested the resignation of Deputy Coroner Rebecca Houghlin, his daughter, to avoid a conflict with the Nelson County Ethics Ordinance passed by Fiscal Court several years ago. "When I had a vacancy for a deputy, I had requested that County Judge Executive Dean Watts appoint Rebecca," Houghlin said, "because she holds an associate's degree in Mortuary Science, which provided training in human anatomy, physiology, microbiology, and other science subjects useful to the office of the coroner. She is also my daughter, and I did not realize that the ethics ordinance lists this as a conflict."

Houghlin added, "I certainly would not intentionally do anything contrary to the ethics law. This is a county ordinance, not a state law, so it was simply an oversight on my part, and Judge Watts. I have asked for Rebecca's resignation so that the Nelson County Coroner's Office is in full compliance with all pertinent regulations and statutes."

A check of those serving in other counties as Coroners and Deputy Coroners showed that close relatives fill those positions in several counties, including Spencer, Taylor, Bourbon, and Muhlenberg counties. Houghlin has been a deputy coroner or coroner for over thirty years and is running for the constitutional office again, without opposition in the May primary.

"I apologize for my oversight, but we have easily taken care of this," he said. "I will not fill the vacancy at this time, as it is very difficult to find a qualified person for a part-time, \$ 300 per month position. Chief Deputy Brian Pappenfuss and I will continue to serve through this term, with the hope to continue serving thereafter." He noted that Pappenfuss has served as Chief Deputy here for several years, also holds a degree in mortuary science, has all required training, and was formerly an assistant to his father, the Chief Medical Examiner of Nebraska.