

# AMERICAN BANKRUPTCY INSTITUTE JOURNAL

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## ABC Update

BY MARTHA R. LEHMAN

### A Conversation with Judge Graham

Indiana's newest bankruptcy judge took an unlikely route from his family's farm in North Dakota to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Indiana. Hon. **Jeffrey J. Graham** began his service on the Southern District of Indiana's Bankruptcy bench on Oct. 1, 2014, but his path to the bench began long before that. Judge Graham grew up on a farm in North Dakota as the youngest of two children. He decided to explore a bit and enrolled at the University of Notre Dame, where he studied English and communications. He remembers considering law school in his junior year of college as he realized that he was going to have to get an advanced degree. After graduating *summa cum laude* from Valparaiso University School of Law, Judge Graham clerked for Hon. S. Hugh Dillin in the Southern District of Indiana.

As his clerkship was ending, Judge Graham interviewed with local Indianapolis law firm Sommer & Barnard, now part of Taft Stettinius & Hollister. He was attracted to the teaching and mentoring opportunities that the firm afforded, and he liked the idea of remaining in federal court. Several large bankruptcy cases contributed to his training and development as a young bankruptcy lawyer. During his time with Taft Stettinius & Hollister, Judge Graham's practice included business restructuring and creditors' rights. He later became board certified in business bankruptcy law through the American Board of Certification (ABC) prior to joining the bench.

Judge Graham reports that his first half year on the bench has been "fun." He is blessed with an experienced staff, which has allowed him to transition well into his new role. Judge Graham misses the personal interaction that came from being part of a large firm with an active practice, but, as you can imagine, he does not miss billing time. He also misses the "lawyering" and advising clients. While Judge Graham had modest experience with the consumer bar prior to taking the bench, he has

enjoyed learning about consumer work and hearing consumer debtors' stories. He also appreciates the opportunity to decide an issue as it should be decided without the pressure of advocating for one particular point of view and without cost constraints.



Hon. Jeffrey J. Graham

An ABI member since 2002, Judge Graham met his wife on a blind date that was set up by one of his law school classmates; they have two children, ages 7 and 9. Like any good Notre Dame alumnus, he enjoys sports, especially the Fighting Irish. He roots for the Indianapolis Colts, Minnesota Vikings, Los Angeles Dodgers and Minnesota Twins. As were that is not enough, as a nod to his wife, Judge Graham also follows the Chicago Cubs. He jogs occasionally, but he claims that the exercise is only so that he can enjoy good food.

The ABC congratulates Judge Graham on his selection as a U.S. bankruptcy judge and wishes him the best of luck on the bench. **abi**

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