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alaska judicial council

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Alaska Judicial Council Trial Judge Questionnaire

2024 Candidates for Judicial Retention

Deadline: November 17, 2023

Rachel Ahrens	Valdez Superior Court
Name	Court

1. Please estimate your workload during your present term.

a) <u>60</u> % civil cases	b) <u>2</u> # of jury trials/year
<u>30</u> % criminal cases	<u>10</u> # of non-jury trials/year
<u>10</u> % court administrative work	<u>1</u> # of administrative appeals/year
100 % Total	

2. Please describe your participation on court/bar committees or other administrative activities during your current term of office.

I am a member of the National Association of Women Judges, and have been on the Rural Courts committee. I've also been a previous member of the American Judges Association and the National College of Probate Judges.

3. Please describe any judicial or legal education you have undertaken or provided during your current term in office.

I attended the following conferences:
Newer Judges Conference - 2020, 2021, 2022
Annual Judicial Conference - 2020-2023

I attended the following courses at the National Judicial College:
2-week General Jurisdiction course
1-week Decision Making course
Mindfulness for Judges Webinar
Judicial Discretion and Contempt Webinar
Jury Management Webinar
Judicial Demeanor Webinar
(I plan to take a 1-week Advanced Evidence course in 2024)

I attended the Alaska CINA Court Improvement Project ICWA Training

4. Please describe any public outreach activities during your current term in office.

I swore in the new members of the Valdez Youth Court and have given a presentation to the new attorney members of the Valdez Youth Court.

I gave a presentation to students at Valdez High School for Career Day, and will be doing so on an annual basis.

I've attended Community Care Providers Meetings in Valdez.

I volunteered at the Success Inside and Out program at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center

5. This question pertains to Superior Court judges only.

State law requires the Council to conduct an evaluation of judges standing for retention, and to provide information to the public about the judges. Under a provision added in 2013, the information the Council provides to the public "shall include the judge's consideration of victims when imposing sentence on persons convicted of felony offenses where the offenses involve victims" (see AS 22.10.150).

Please submit a short statement about how you consider victims when imposing sentences in felony offenses.

Before imposing any felony sentence in which there is a victim, I always make sure the DA's office has contacted the victim, as required by statute. If the victim has not been contacted, I continue the sentencing hearing to give the DA's office time to contact the victim. Once we get to the sentencing hearing, I hear from the victim, if they choose to be heard, either through the DA's office, the Office of Victim's Rights, by written statement on the pre-sentence report, or if they choose to speak on their own at the sentencing hearing.

Since the court is required to consider the extent to which the offense harmed the victim as part of the sentencing factors, it is important to make sure that victims are not only heard, but to make sure that I understand how the crime already affected them, and how and whether they think it will affect them in the future.

6. Please assess, in one or two paragraphs, your judicial performance during your present term. Appropriate areas of comment could include: satisfaction with your judicial role, specific contributions to the judiciary or the field of law, increases in legal knowledge and judicial skills, or other measures of judicial abilities that you believe to be important.

I began this job at the beginning of the pandemic and preside in a single-judge location, so this job was more challenging than I anticipated it to be at the beginning. I had a steep learning curve in family law, domestic relations, CINA and probate cases. However, as the only Superior Court judge in the state with no judicial assistant, I take pride in my organizational skills and my ability to maintain my calendar including my travel between the three locations to which I'm assigned (Glennallen and Cordova, as well as Valdez), while also keeping on top of my substantive work.

The transition from advocate to neutral came naturally. I feel I'm able to make fair decisions while keeping an open mind. Listening to all of the parties and making them feel heard is key to parties feeling satisfied with the justice system, so I strive to do this in all of my cases. However, I can improve in all areas of this position.

A more experienced judge told me that it takes 3-5 years to become comfortable in this position, and at just under 4 years, I'm just starting to become comfortable in some areas, with many areas needing much more time. I still have so many things to learn each day, and so many areas to improve upon. I would like to be more efficient in making decisions from the bench rather than taking matters under advisement. Over the last year, I've completed approximately 20 contested, substantive hearings or trials, so my trial skills have greatly improved, but this is also an area I'd like to improve upon.

While this is the most challenging position I've ever had, it is also the most rewarding. I have been working on improving my skills, demeanor, and performance and am committed to becoming a better judge. It is an honor to serve as a judicial officer for the people of Alaska.

7. During your most recent term as a judge, have you:
- a) had a tax lien filed or other collection procedure instituted against you by federal, state, or local authorities? Yes No
 - b) been involved in a non-judicial capacity in any legal proceeding whether as a party or otherwise? Yes No
 - c) engaged in the practice of law (other than as a judge)? Yes No
 - d) held office in any political party? Yes No
 - e) held any other local, state or federal office? Yes No
 - f) had any complaints, charges or grievances filed against you with the Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct, the Alaska Bar Association, the Alaska Court System, or any other agency that resulted in public proceedings or sanctions?
 Yes No

8. If your answer to any of the questions above is "yes," please give full details, including dates, facts, case numbers, and outcomes.

9. Please provide any other information which you believe would assist the Council in conducting its evaluations and in preparing its recommendations for the 2024 retention elections.

For questions 10 - 13, please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.

- 10. Please list your three most recent jury trials during your current term in office including case names and numbers. Please list the names and current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Case Number 1

Case Name: State of Alaska **Case Number:** 3CO-20-00007CR
v. David Brocious

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Krista Anderson</u>	Name: <u>Andrew Weinraub</u>
Address: <u>515 E. Dahlia Ave, Ste 150</u>	Address: <u>1517 S. Industrial Way, Unit 1</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 2

Case Name: State of Alaska **Case Number:** 3VA-20-00075CR
v. Christina Johnson

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Noah Roetman</u>	Name: <u>Jason Weiner</u>
Address: <u>222 W. 7th Ave, #9, Room 253</u>	Address: <u>1008 16th Ave, Ste 200</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99513</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Fairbanks, AK 99701</u>
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 3

Case Name: State of Alaska **Case Number:** 3CO-18-00010CR
v. Kail Vanderpool

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Jordyn Caldwell</u>	Name: <u>Devin Morse</u>
Address: <u>515 E Dahlia Ave, Ste 150</u>	Address: <u>900 W 5th Ave, Ste 200</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>
Name: _____	Name: <u>Peter Lovecchio</u>
Address: _____	Address: <u>48 W Third St</u>
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: <u>Williamsport, PA 17701</u>

- 11. Please list your three most recent non-jury trials during your current term in office including case names and numbers. Please list the names and current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Case Number 1

Case Name: In the Matter of the Welfare of: A.B., O.B., J.B. Case Number: 3GL-16-00002/03/04CN

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Nicholas Torres</u>	Name: <u>Linda Beecher</u>
Address: <u>110 Trading Bay, Ste 110</u>	Address: <u>900 W 5th Ave, Ste 101</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Kenai, AK 99611</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>

Name: <u>Brian Starr</u>	Name: <u>Pearl Pickett</u>
Address: <u>1031 W 4th Ave, Ste 200</u>	Address: <u>1016 W 6th Ave, Ste 200</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>

Case Number 2

Case Name: In the Matter of the Welfare of: T.D. Case Number: 3GL-21-00005CN

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Nicholas Torres</u>	Name: <u>James Bauman</u>
Address: <u>110 Trading Bay, Ste 110</u>	Address: <u>167 Park Ave, Ste 3</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Kenai, AK 99611</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Wasilla, AK 99654</u>

Name: <u>Erika Kahill</u>	Name: <u>Patrick Stocks</u>
Address: <u>900 W 5th Ave, Ste 200</u>	Address: <u>1517 Industrial Way, Unit 1</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>

Case Number 3

Case Name: In the Matter of the Welfare of: A.R., J.R. Case Number: 3GL-21-00018/19CN

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Nicholas Torres</u>	Name: <u>Olivia Mackin</u>
Address: <u>110 Trading Bay, Ste 110</u>	Address: <u>1517 S Industrial Way, Unit 1</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Kenai, AK 99611</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>

Name: <u>Paul Morin</u>	Name: <u>Erika Kahill</u>
Address: <u>110 Trading Bay, Ste 110</u>	Address: <u>900 W 5th Ave, Ste 200</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Kenai, AK 99611</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>

Question #11 continued (non-jury trial)

Case Number 1

In the Matter of the Welfare of:
A.B., O.B., J.B.

3GL-16-00002/03/04CN

Attorneys Involved

Nikole Schick
100 Cushman St Ste 502
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Patrick Stocks
1517 Industrial Way, Unit 1
Palmer, AK 99645

12. Please list your three most recent cases during your current term in office, including case names and numbers, which did not go to trial, but on which you did significant work (such as settlement conference, hearings, motion work, etc.). Please list the names and current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Case Number 1

Case Name: State of Alaska Case Number: 3VA-23-00030CR
v. Robert Dunning

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Noah Roetman</u>	Name: <u>Emily Belic</u>
Address: <u>222 W. 7th Ave, #9, Room 253</u>	Address: <u>101 Park Ave</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99513</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>New York, NY 10178</u>

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 2

Case Name: State of Alaska Case Number: 3GL-22-00028CR
v. Alece Miller

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Lauren Taylor</u>	Name: <u>Bridget Lynn</u>
Address: <u>515 E Dahlia Ave, Ste 150</u>	Address: <u>900 W 5th Ave, Ste 200</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Palmer, AK 99645</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99501</u>

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 3

Case Name: Matthew Fritch Case Number: 3GL-22-00023CI
v. Jennifer Fritch

Attorneys Involved:

Name: <u>Seth Dinkel</u>	Name: <u>Daniel Allan</u>
Address: <u>800 E Railroad Ave, Ste 300</u>	Address: <u>800 E Diamond Blvd, Ste 3-620</u>
City, State, Zip: <u>Wasilla, AK 99654</u>	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99515</u>

Name: _____	Name: <u>Elijah McLeod</u>
Address: _____	Address: <u>471 W 36th Ave, Ste 202</u>
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: <u>Anchorage, AK 99503</u>

13. *Optional:* If you deem it helpful to the Council, please list up to three other cases during your current term in which you believe your work was particularly noteworthy. Please list the names and current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Case Number 1

Case Name: _____ *Case Number:* _____

v. _____

Attorneys Involved:

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 2

Case Name: _____ *Case Number:* _____

v. _____

Attorneys Involved:

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Case Number 3

Case Name: _____ *Case Number:* _____

v. _____

Attorneys Involved:

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____

Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____	City, State, Zip: _____