

## **Judicial Position Descriptions**

To be successful, a judge must be proficient in understanding oral and written communications, and must effectively communicate orally and in writing with parties, attorneys, members of the public, and court employees. Judges must regularly employ a high level of analytical legal reasoning, must possess unimpaired judgment, and must be able to concentrate on and evaluate evidence and legal arguments. Judges must be willing and able to render timely and impartial decisions, without regard for popular sentiment. They must treat parties, attorneys, the public, and court employees with fairness, courtesy and respect, and they must work effectively under pressure. In addition to presiding over cases, Alaska judges are expected to serve on court committees working to improve the administration of justice in the state.

The working environment is a courtroom and office setting. Alaska judges typically sit in court or in chambers for long periods of time, but sitting is not an essential requirement of the job; some judges prefer to stand or make comparable adjustments for their individual needs. Judges may be required to travel, including travel to rural areas, often by small airplane. They may be temporarily reassigned to different court locations within the state. Judges may share weekend duty with other judicial officers.

### **Superior Court Judge**

Superior court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.10.090. They must be familiar with Alaska law, procedure, and trial practice. Alaska judges must conform their conduct to the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct and the laws of Alaska and the United States. Superior court judges stand for retention at the first general election held more than three years after their initial appointment and every six years thereafter. Further information regarding the jurisdiction, authority, and duties of superior court judges may be found at AS 22.10.

### **District Court Judge**

District court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.15.160. District court judges stand for retention at the first general election held more than two years after their initial appointment, and every four years thereafter. Further information regarding the jurisdiction, authority and duties of district court judges may be found at AS 22.15.

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### ***Homer Superior Court, Third Judicial District***

The legislature reclassified the vacant Homer district court position to a superior court position. The new general jurisdiction judge will have regional duties, presiding over the Homer trial courts and assisting with cases in the other court locations on the Kenai Peninsula and in western Alaska. The new superior court judge will hear all civil and criminal matters and both superior and district court matters, including traffic and minor offense cases. Unlike other single judge locations, Homer does not have a magistrate judge to assist with district court matters. According to the Alaska Court System's fiscal year 2018 annual report, 332 cases were filed in the Homer Superior Court, including 99 felony cases, 47 child-in-need-of-aid matters, 8

delinquency matters, 55 domestic relations matters, 41 general civil matters, and 82 probate matters. During the same year, 347 cases were filed in the Homer District Court, including 347 misdemeanors, 1,566 minor offenses, 48 small claim cases, 167 civil protective orders, and 90 general civil cases.

The Homer Superior Court judge also will be assigned other matters in the Third Judicial District, and frequent travel is expected to Kenai most often and to Sand Point, less frequently. As this superior court position is new, the court system is still exploring how to assign cases to it from other locations. Thus, the new judge must be prepared to have a fluctuating caseload from various court locations.

Because the Homer caseload is low compared to other superior courts, the Homer superior court judge does not have his or her own law clerk or a judicial assistant. Some staff support will be provided, either by the Homer clerk's office or by staff in other courts, but the judge should be prepared to function independently and to handle a variety of clerical or administrative tasks in addition to adjudicative responsibilities. The annual salary of the Homer Superior Court judge is \$189,720.

#### *Valdez Superior Court, Third Judicial District*

The legislature reclassified the vacant Valdez district court position to a superior court position. The new general jurisdiction judge will have regional duties, presiding over the Valdez trial courts and overseeing the Glennallen and Cordova magistrate courts. The Valdez superior court judge will hear both civil and criminal matters and both superior and district court matters, including traffic and minor offense cases. Although a magistrate judge currently resides in Valdez, that magistrate judge is assigned primarily to the Glennallen court and travels frequently. Therefore, the Valdez superior court judge should not expect regular assistance from that magistrate judge in Valdez cases.

According to the Alaska Court System's fiscal year 2018 annual report, 70 cases were filed in the Valdez Superior Court, including 15 felony cases, 3 child-in-need-of-aid matters, 6 delinquency matters, 25 domestic relations matters, 8 general civil matters, and 13 probate matters. During the same year, 436 cases were filed in the Valdez District Court, including 113 misdemeanors, 269 minor offenses, 11 small claim cases, 28 civil protective orders, and 30 general civil cases. An additional 81 superior court cases were filed in Glennallen and Cordova, the two magistrate courts currently served by the Valdez judge.

The Valdez superior court judge also will be assigned cases from other court locations in the Third Judicial District. The Valdez superior court judge should expect to travel at least one week per month. In addition, many of the judge's hearings will be handled telephonically or by video. Because the Valdez caseload is low compared to other superior courts, the Valdez superior court judge does not have his or her own law clerk or a judicial assistant. Some staff support will be provided, either by the Valdez clerk's office or by staff in other courts, but the judge should be prepared to function independently and to handle a variety of clerical or administrative tasks in addition to adjudicative responsibilities. The annual salary of the Valdez Superior Court judge is \$200,724.

***Kenai District Court, Third Judicial District***

A District Court position will be open in Kenai due to the forthcoming retirement of Judge Sharon A.S. Illsley. Kenai has one district court judge who presides over a limited jurisdiction trial court serving Kenai in the Third Judicial District. According to data available from the Alaska Court System for FY 2018, 8,361 cases were filed in the Kenai District Court, including 1,242 misdemeanors, 6,165 minor offenses, 217 small claims, 438 civil protective orders, and 299 general civil cases. A Kenai District Court judge hears both criminal and civil proceedings. The annual salary of a district court judge in Kenai is \$160,848.

***Palmer District Court, Third Judicial District***

A District Court position will be open in Palmer due to the forthcoming retirement of Judge John W. Wolfe. Palmer has three district court judges who preside over a limited jurisdiction trial court serving Palmer in the Third Judicial District. According to data available from the Alaska Court System for FY 2018, 13,552 cases were filed in the Palmer District Court, including 1,705 misdemeanors, 9,391 minor offenses, 660 small claims, 858 civil protective orders, and 938 general civil cases. A Palmer District Court judge hears both criminal and civil proceedings. The annual salary of a district court judge in Palmer is \$160,848.