



alaska judicial council

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Press Release

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Announcing Applicants

Anchorage District & Nome Superior Courts

Six attorneys have applied to the Alaska Judicial Council for a position on the Anchorage District Court and three attorneys have applied for a position on the Nome Superior Court. These vacancies are due to the impending retirement of Judge Brian K. Clark (Anchorage District Court) and the resignation of Judge Romano DiBenedetto (Nome Superior Court).

Applicants for the judgeships will be evaluated by the Council's seven members (the chief justice, three non-attorney members, and three attorney members). Comprehensive background investigations, a survey of Alaska Bar members, and personal interviews with the applicants are all part of the evaluation, according to the Council's Executive Director, Susanne DiPietro. Interviews with applicants and public hearings will be held in August 2026. The Council will nominate two or more applicants for each vacancy to send to the governor, after which the governor will have 45 days to make appointments from the Council's lists of nominees.

The applicants for the Anchorage District Court are:

Eva Khadjinova: Ms. Khadjinova has been an Alaska resident for 12 years and has practiced law for 16 ½ years. She graduated from the Syracuse University College of Law in

2008 and is currently the supervising attorney for Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) in Anchorage.

Julia Metzger: Ms. Metzger has been an Alaska resident for 13½ years and has practiced law for 13½ years. She graduated from the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law in 2012 and is currently a supervising assistant public advocate with the Office of Public Advocacy in Anchorage.

Ben Muse: Mr. Muse has been an Alaska resident for 44 years and has practiced law for 15 years. He graduated from the Gonzaga University School of Law in 2010 and is currently an assistant federal defender in Anchorage.

Eric Salinger: Mr. Salinger has been an Alaska resident for 12½ years and has practiced law for 12½ years. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 2013 and is currently an administrative law judge in Anchorage.

Sam Vandergaw: Mr. Vandergaw has been an Alaska resident for 41½ years and has practiced law for 15½ years. He graduated from the Gonzaga University School of Law in 2009 and is currently an assistant attorney general with the Office of Special Prosecutions in Anchorage.

Matt Widmer: Mr. Widmer has been an Alaska resident for 20½ years and has practiced law for 20½ years. He graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2005 and is currently in private practice in Anchorage.

The applicants for the Nome Superior Court are:

Nicholas Adam Defreitas: Mr. Defreitas has been an Alaska resident for 7 ½ years and has practiced law for 8 years. He graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law in 2017 and is currently a magistrate judge in Utqiagvik.

Elisabeth Mering: Ms. Mering has been an Alaska resident for 9 years and has practiced law for 9 years. She graduated from Lewis & Clark Law School in 2016 and is currently the Tribal Child Welfare Program Manager with the Association of Village Council Presidents.

John Revis: Mr. Revis has been an Alaska resident for 35 years and has practiced law for 7 years. He graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in 2019 and is currently in private practice in Wasilla.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THESE APPLICANTS IS ENCOURAGED DURING THE EVALUATION PHASE OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK. TO COMMENT, OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT SUSANNE DIPIETRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA JUDICIAL COUNCIL, 510 L STREET, SUITE 450, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-1295, (907) 279-2526.

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