



alaska judicial council

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Press Release

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Announcing Applicants

Juneau, Utqiagvik, and Anchorage Superior Courts

Seven attorneys have applied to the Alaska Judicial Council for a position on the Juneau Superior Court, three attorneys have applied for a position on the Utqiagvik Superior Court, and seven attorneys have applied for a position on the Anchorage 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 evaluations, according to the Council's Executive Director, Susanne DiPietro. Interviews with applicants and public hearings will be held in November 2021. The Council will select two or more nominees for each vacancy to send to the governor. The governor will have 45 days to make appointments from the Council's nominees after the Council makes its nominations.

The applicants for the Juneau Superior Court are:

Amanda L. Browning: Magistrate Judge Browning has been an Alaska resident for 10 years and has practiced law for 16 years. She graduated from Roger Williams University Ralph R. Pappito School of Law in 2005 and is currently a magistrate judge in Kenai.

Marianna Carpeneti: Ms. Carpeneti has been an Alaska resident for 36 years and has practiced law for 9 years. She graduated from the University of Washington School of Law in 2012 and is currently in private practice in Homer.

Grace Y. Lee: Ms. Lee has been an Alaska resident for 30½ years and has practiced law for 10½ years. She graduated from Seattle University School of Law in 2010 and is currently an assistant attorney general in the Labor and State Affairs section in Juneau.

Nicholas Polasky: Mr. Polasky has been an Alaska resident for 34 years and has practiced law for 14 years. He graduated from the University of St. Thomas School of Law in 2006 and is currently in private practice in Juneau.

Hanna Sebold: Ms. Sebold has been an Alaska resident for 18 years and has practiced law for 22 years. She graduated from California Western School of Law in 1998 and is currently an assistant district attorney in Juneau.

Bailey Jennifer Woolfstead: Ms. Woolfstead has been an Alaska resident for 9 years and has practiced law for 8 years. She graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2012 and is currently an assistant district attorney in the Rural Prosecution Unit in Juneau.

Emily L. Wright: Magistrate Judge Wright has been an Alaska resident for 10 years and has practiced law for 12½ years. She graduated from the University of Colorado Law School in 2008 and is currently a magistrate judge in Juneau.

The applicants for the Utqiagvik Superior Court are:

Colleen Baxter: Ms. Baxter has been an Alaska resident for 51½ years and has practiced law for 23½ years. She graduated from Temple University School of Law in 1996 and is currently in private practice in Anchorage.

Dara N. Gibson: Ms. Gibson has been an Alaska resident for 5 years and has practiced law for 5 years. She graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2015 and is currently an assistant district attorney in Juneau.

David L. Roghair: Magistrate Judge Roghair has been an Alaska resident for 25½ years and has practiced law for 15 years. He graduated from Lewis & Clark Law School in 2006 and is currently a magistrate judge in Utqiagvik.

The applicants for the Anchorage Superior Court are:

Kate Demarest: Ms. Demarest has been an Alaska resident for 11 years and has practiced law for 13 years. She graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2008 and is currently a senior assistant attorney general in the Opinions, Appeals, and Ethics section at the Department of Law in Anchorage.

Laura Hartz: Ms. Hartz has been an Alaska resident for 12½ years and has practiced law for 13½ years. She graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law in 2005 and is currently an assistant public advocate in Anchorage.

Jack R. McKenna: Mr. McKenna has been an Alaska resident for 12 years and has practiced law for 13½ years. He graduated from the University of California, Davis, School of Law in 2007 and is currently the Criminal Division Director, at the Department of Law in Anchorage.

Margaret Paton Walsh: Ms. Paton Walsh has been an Alaska resident for 17 years and has practiced law for 16 years. She graduated from Harvard Law School in 2004 and is currently the Chief Assistant Attorney General, Special Litigation Section, at the Department of Law in Anchorage.

Christina Rankin: Ms. Rankin has been an Alaska resident for 19 years and has practiced law for 19 years. She graduated from Syracuse University College of Law in 2002 and is currently in private practice in Anchorage.

Ian Wheelles: Mr. Wheelles has been an Alaska resident for 38½ years and has practiced law for 13 years. He graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in 2007 and is currently in private practice in Anchorage.

Matt Widmer: Mr. Widmer has been an Alaska resident for 16 years and has practiced law for 16 years. He graduated from William & Mary Law School in 2005 and is currently in private practice in Anchorage.

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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