



alaska judicial council

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Press Release

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Alaska Judicial Council Report to the Community about Judges on the November Ballot September 2, 2026

The Alaska Judicial Council has released its report to the community on the judges who will appear on the ballot at the general election in November 2026. The Council found that eighteen judges met performance standards and recommends that Alaskans vote “YES” to retain them. The Council found that two judges did not meet performance standards and recommends that Alaskans vote “NO” on their retention. The report to the community is posted on the Council’s web site at www.ajc.state.ak.us.

The Council reviewed detailed information about each judge to determine if the judge met performance standards in the categories of legal ability, impartiality and fairness, integrity, temperament, diligence, administrative skills, compliance with educational requirements, and ethical conduct.

The Judicial Council found that eighteen judges met performance standards and recommends a “**YES**” vote to retain them in office.

Vote “**YES**” to Retain

Statewide

- Supreme Court Justice **Jude Pate**.

First Judicial District

- Superior Court Judge **Daniel E. Doty**, Ketchikan;
- Superior Court Judge **Katherine H. Lybrand**, Ketchikan.

Second Judicial District

- Superior Court Judge **David L. Roghair**, Utqiagvik.

Third Judicial District

- Superior Court Judge **Laura Hartz**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **Yvonne Lamoureux**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **Jack R. McKenna**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **David A. Nesbett**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **Christina Rankin**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **Ian Wheeles**, Anchorage;
- District Court Judge **Chris Darnall**, Anchorage;
- Superior Court Judge **Christina “Tina” Reigh**, Dillingham;
- Superior Court Judge **Jonathan A. Woodman**, Palmer;
- District Court Judge **Shawn D. Traini**, Palmer.

Fourth Judicial District

- Superior Court Judge **Kirk Schwalm**, Fairbanks;
- Superior Court Judge **Amy K. Welch**, Fairbanks;

- District Court Judge **Benjamin A. Seekins**, Fairbanks; and
- Superior Court Judge **Nathaniel Peters**, Bethel.

The Alaska Judicial Council found that two judges did not meet performance standards and recommends that Alaskans in the Third Judicial District vote “**NO**” on their retention.

Vote “**NO**”

- Superior Court Judge **Kelly J. Lawson**, Kenai (Third Judicial District); and
- District Court Judge **Martin Fallon**, Kenai (Third Judicial District).

The Council recommends a “No” vote on Judge Lawson because she failed to meet performance standards for judicial temperament and integrity. More information is posted on the Alaska Judicial Council website.

The Council recommends a “No” vote on Judge Fallon because he failed to meet performance standards for diligence and administrative skills, and integrity. More information is posted on the Alaska Judicial Council website.

Finally, the Alaska Judicial Council reviewed the performance of Juneau Superior Court Judge **Marianna Carpeneti** (First Judicial District) but did not make any findings or recommendation regarding her retention in office. Judge Carpeneti’s full performance evaluation report is posted on the Alaska Judicial Council website, and a summary of her performance evaluation is published in the Lieutenant Governor’s Official Election Pamphlet.

The Alaska Constitution and state law require judges periodically to appear on the ballot to continue serving in office. The judges appear on the ballot for a “yes” or “no” vote. Twenty-one state court judges have filed declarations of candidacy to serve another term in office: one appellate judge and twenty trial judges. The Alaska Judicial Council is required by law to evaluate the judges and report on their performance, and has made its recommendations based on this evaluation.

The Alaska Judicial Council is an independent citizens' commission established in Article IV of Alaska's Constitution. The members include three public members who are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the legislature, and three attorney members who are appointed by the Alaska Bar Association Board of Governors:

- Kristie Babcock, public member from Soldotna;
- Patricia Collins, attorney member from Juneau;
- Dennis DeWitt, public member from Juneau;
- Savannah Fletcher, attorney member from Fairbanks;
- Mike Miller, public member from Fairbanks; and
- Jeffrey Robinson, attorney member from Anchorage.

The Council members volunteer their time and serve staggered, six-year terms. The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court, currently Chief Justice Susan Carney, presides as chair ex officio, and votes only when to do so would make a difference.

Performance Standards for Evaluations of Judges: The Judicial Council evaluated whether each judge or justice met performance standards for legal ability, impartiality and fairness, integrity, temperament, diligence, administrative skills, compliance with educational requirements, and ethical conduct. Information collected by the Council included the following:

- Feedback, ratings, and comments from justice system professionals familiar with each judge's work, including law enforcement and probation officers, court employees, attorneys, and social service professionals (social workers, court appointed special advocates, tribal ICWA workers, and guardians ad litem);
- Survey ratings and comments from jurors who served in a judge's courtroom;
- Input from the public;
- How often a trial judge's decisions were affirmed (ruled as correct) by a higher court on appeal;
- Any instances when a judge's pay was withheld for an untimely decision;
- Whether a judge was the subject of public disciplinary procedures before the Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct;
- An analysis of peremptory challenge data, which shows how often parties asked for a different judge to be assigned to their case;

- An analysis of recusal data, which shows how often a judge disqualified themselves from a case because their impartiality might reasonably have been questioned;
- Financial disclosure statements from the Alaska Public Offices Commission, and separate conflict-of-interest forms filed with the court system, to evaluate whether a judge's financial interests may present a conflict of interest;
- Records relating to any criminal convictions, driving violations, and license actions;
- Credit history;
- Court personnel files and reports from presiding judges of the pertinent judicial districts;
- A review of any court cases involving a judge as a party or witness; and
- A review of the judges' professional and community service activities, and educational activities.

The Council listened to court proceedings, and interviewed judges, attorneys, court staff, and others as necessary.

The Council received feedback from the public about the judges. Members of the public submitted feedback via the Council's website, and during a statewide public hearing held in May of 2026.

The State of Alaska's Official Elections Pamphlet published by the Division of Elections will include the Council's recommendations and summaries of the Council's evaluations. The Council's Report to the Community is published on the Council's website at www.ajc.state.ak.us.

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