



alaska judicial council

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Alaska Judicial Council

Retention Questionnaire

2026 Candidates for Judicial Retention

Full Name: Amy Kate Welch

Court: Fairbanks Superior Court

1a. Please estimate your workload during your present term:

- **Case work:** 70%
- **Administrative work, outreach, continuing education, etc:** 30%

1b. Superior Court Judges:

- **Criminal:** 20%
- **Delinquency:** 1%
- **Domestic Relations:** 15%
- **Child in Need of Aid:** 8%
- **Probate:** 48%
- **General Civil (Including Appeals):** 8%

1c. Number of jury trials/year: 4

1d. Number of non-jury trials/year: 10

1e. Any additional information you would like to provide about your workload?

I calculated the above figures utilizing the pending case report. The percentages are from 625 open cases currently assigned to me. As such, they reflect only the number of cases in each category, but do not reflect workload realities. For example, although 300 probate cases are assigned to me, my workload relating to those cases tends to be minimal. Unless a matter is contested, there is usually little work for me to do. The majority of my courtroom time feels evenly split among criminal, CINA, and domestic relations cases. Domestic relations cases typically proceed to trial more often than the others and they tend to require more "desk time" to

write orders. Anecdotally, it feels like those cases likely take the most time. In CINA cases, the bulk of courtroom time is used for review and permanency hearings. "Desk time" is generally used to review petitions and reports, but also to finalize review and permanency orders as well as adjudication and termination orders. Often, however, the parties reach agreements on adjudication and disposition, so adjudications are not frequently taken under advisement.

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 criminal pattern jury instruction committee. This work has involved drafting and revising pattern jury instructions. The committee relies upon statutory changes and appellate opinions when creating or modifying instructions. At times we meet as frequently as once per month, but at other times there are longer gaps between meetings.

I also participated in a working group focused on updating internal administrative policies for registration of foreign protective orders. The goal of this group was to create a uniform set of procedures for clerks to follow when asked to register a foreign domestic violence protective order. This group focused on the requirements for registration set forth in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to ensure that the Alaska Court System's registration policies aligned with federal requirements.

I am also being placed into the wellness court rotation starting early 2026. Although this has not happened yet, I am looking forward to participating in the program.

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

I have attended two of the three newer judge trainings. I am scheduled to attend the last training in January 2026. I also attended the 2023, 2024, and 2025 judicial conferences. At each of these trainings and conferences, there have been numerous CLEs focused on a wide range of topics. The topics have included nuts-and-bolts trainings in CINA, probate, and evidence. There have also been trainings in case management, judicial wellness, and Alaska Native cultural approaches to justice.

In addition to the mandatory trainings, I also took the mediation training through the National Judicial College. The Fairbanks court now has three settlement judges and has been able to offer settlement conferences to litigants again.

At the 2025 judicial conference, I participated on a panel that focused on affording comity or full faith and credit to foreign orders under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). A focus of this panel was to highlight that Tribes are sovereign entities and that the State courts are not to reevaluate the evidence to determine if they agree with the Tribal Court's decision. In other words, while there are exceptions to every rule, Tribal Court orders must be treated the same as orders issued by a State Court. The panel also facilitated a discussion about Civil Rule 5.4, which addresses registration of Tribal Court orders under the comity doctrine.

4. Please describe any public outreach activities.

My public outreach activities have focused on students. I have had a couple of groups of young kids come to the courthouse for tours and mock Goldilocks trials. One of the local charter schools has an eighth grade project that requires students to shadow professionals in the community. I have made myself available to that school and have had one student participate. I would be happy to expand that to other schools, but I believe that this one is the only school with that kind of project.

I sometimes attend TVBA bar lunches and provide local court updates. Unfortunately, I am not able to attend frequently. I did prepare a list of TrueFiling codes and explanations for use to be circulated amongst attorneys to assist staff in appropriately filing documents post-OnBase rollout. The goal was to make the filing process easier on parties and on the court when there was a backlog during the civil OnBase transition.

During my first year, I made sure to visit Fort Yukon because it is my assigned rural court. The Tribal Council was kind enough to invite me, Magistrate Huisingsh, and Derek Sullivan (our rural court administrator) to a council meeting. The Council was able to voice some of its concerns regarding the justice system, which I was glad to hear. While the court system is not in a position to address some of the significant concerns (such as lack of law enforcement), it was an insightful discussion. Deputy Magistrate Peter took the time to show us around Fort Yukon, which has been immensely helpful when considering bail proposals. Being able to visualize and understand the village's layout helps in understanding the overall situation and consideration of the bail factors relating to victim and community safety. While brief, the visit helped put faces to names and it helped me to understand the community I work with a little better.

Outside of my role as a judicial officer, I volunteer to lead the elementary children's church group at my church. In this role, I have been able to form relationships with many of the children and their parents. I am open with them about my work and am often surprised by the kinds of misconceptions that people have about how the court works. It has been rewarding to shed light on what judges can or cannot do. A common concern relates to the court's role when it comes to Rule 11 agreements in criminal cases. Many people are surprised to learn that, often, the court has no authority beyond accepting or rejecting the agreement.

5. 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.

The transition from being a litigator to a judicial officer has been both rewarding and rocky. I enjoy the job, itself. Both in the courtroom and in chambers I feel a great sense of accomplishment in tackling and solving legal problems. Some problems, of course, are much easier to solve than others. I enjoy the challenge and the fact that every day brings something new for me to learn about the law, the litigants, and myself. Child in need of aid (CINA) litigation was the area in which I had almost no experience coming into this job. It has been a steep learning curve, particularly because a significant part of the case progress and issues are handled out of court. Many times, reading the rules and statutes did little to prepare me for the procedural nuances that the parties expected. I recognize that the transition was difficult for everyone

involved. However, I believe that I have greatly improved in this area and I truly enjoy CINA work. I still have plenty to learn about this particular field of law, and I am planning on participating in the CINA stakeholder meetings going forward to continue learning about the parties' expectations and case workflow behind-the-scenes.

Over the past two years, I have spent a lot of time learning how to "pick my battles." There is a delicate balance when it comes to maintaining control of the courtroom. On the one hand, it is the court's duty to ensure that cases continue moving forward, that attorneys maintain professionalism and decorum, and that everyone follows applicable rules, statutes, and administrative orders. On the other hand, everyone appearing before the court is human and they are bound to make mistakes. Learning when to put my foot down and when to let things slide (while still treating everyone fairly) has taken a significant amount of trial-and-error. I have discovered techniques that work and some that definitely do not work. I have had to do a fair amount of self-reflection to identify my pet peeves and triggers, and then consciously decide to not be bothered by those things. On balance, I believe that these "growing pains" have and will continue to make me a stronger judicial officer and person.

5a. 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.

Consideration of the victim is a statutory requirement in each sentencing. AS 12.55.005(4) and (7). As such, it is always a consideration even with a Rule 11 agreement. Victims also have the right to make a statement during sentencing. I also give victims who want to make a statement free rein to say what they want. In my opinion, it's important to let them have that opportunity to say what they need to say for closure. Certainly, when a victim chooses to make a statement, that statement is considered when weighing the sentencing factors. When I make a decision that is contrary to what the victim requested, I explain in plain terms the reasons for my decision. Sometimes, the law simply does not allow me to do what the victim wants me to do. Other times, I explain the different legal factors that go into making a decision and my analysis of each factor. I hope that by taking these steps, victims feel heard and considered in the process even at the times when the outcome is not what they wanted.

6. 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?

No

b) been involved in a non-judicial capacity in any legal proceeding whether as a party or otherwise?

Yes

c) engaged in the practice of law (other than as a judge)?

No

d) held office in any political party?

No

e) held any other local, state or federal office?

No

f) had any complaints, charges or grievances filed against you with the Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct, the Alaska Bar Association, or with the Alaska Court System that resulted in public proceedings or sanctions?

No

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

I continue to be named as a party in cases litigated by Donald Tangwall, who has been recognized as a vexatious litigant. I have not had to actively participate in any of these cases because there is a pre-litigation screening order in place. One case is currently open, 4FA-23-01813CI.
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8. Please provide any other information which you believe would assist the Council in conducting its evaluations and in preparing its recommendations for the 2020 retention elections.

I am certainly aware that there has been an adjustment period coming into this job. I have reviewed the comments that were provided to me and have taken them to heart. While I disagree with the characterization of some of the comments, my takeaway is that I need to continue working on my tone and approach in the courtroom. This is an area that I am committed to improving in.

Trial Judges: Questions 9a-9d please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.

9a. Please list your three most recent jury trials including case names and numbers. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (If there are additional pages, please email these to sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us)

Jury Trial Cases

Case 1: State of Alaska v. Morgan Lee Poulsen

(Case No: 4FA-25-00983CR)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Anna Ralph 510 2nd Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Francis "Frank" Sunderland 529 5th Avenue Ste. 1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 3: Maria Fernandez 529 5th Avenue Ste. 1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 2: State of Alaska v. Raymond Holleman

(Case No: 4FA-23-01252CR)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Tylor Schmitt 310 K Street Ste. 520 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Patrick Roach 529 5th Ave #1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 3: State of Alaska v. Danny Lewis

(Case No: 4FA-22-00822CR)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Anna Ralph 510 2nd Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Mary Robinson 2624 Carrie Lynn Drive North Pole, Alaska 99705	Atty 3: Dustin Howie 529 5th Ave #1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Atty 4: Ciana Howie 529 5th Ave #1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701		

Trial Judges: Questions 9a-9d please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.

9b. Please list your three most recent non-jury trials including case names and numbers. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these trials. (If there are additional pages, please email these to sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us)

Non-Jury Trial Cases

Case 1: Aurora Scroggins v. Dylan Scroggins

(Case No: 4FA-22-01366CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Erin Welden 550 W 8th Avenue Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Margaret Rogers 100 Cushman Street Ste. 513 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 2: Peggy Kuryla v. Ashlee Hansen

(Case No: 4FA-24-01658CI)

Total Attorneys: 1

Atty 1: Eric Ringstad 329 2nd Street Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Case 3: Marissa Linn Thomas v. Troy Gregory Thomas

(Case No: 4FA-22-01442CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Amy Schrum 329 2nd Street Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Kristoffer Jensen 11136 Red Sky Circle Anchorage, Alaska 99516
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Trial Judges: Questions 9a-9d please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.

9c. Please list your three most recent cases, 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, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (If there are additional pages, please email these to sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us)

Cases that Did Not Go to Trial

Case 1: Fancy Conner v. Michael Conner

(Case No: 4FA-23-02177CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Jason Weiner 1008 16th Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Eric Ringstad 329 2nd Street Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 2: State of Alaska v. David Lloyd Peterson, Jr.

(Case No: 4FA-18-02150CR)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Kathryn "Katy" Mason 510 2nd Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Jennifer Hite 100 Cushman Street Ste. 201 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 3: John Tiemessen 411 Fourth Avenue Ste. 300 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 3: Jeffrey Whaley v. State of Alaska, Department of Public Safety and Safariland, LLC

(Case No: 4FA-20-02322CI)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Jeffrey Barber 540 E 5th Avenue Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Rebecca Hozubin 711 M Street Ste. 2 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Tyler Broker 100 Cushman Street Ste. 400 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Trial Judges: Questions 9a-9d please do not list any cases that have pending issues in your court.

9d. OPTIONAL: If you deem it helpful to the Council, please list up to three other cases during your past term in which you believe your work was particularly noteworthy. Please list the names, current addresses, including zip codes and suite numbers where applicable, of each attorney involved in these cases. (If there are additional pages, please email these to sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us)

Optional Cases

Case 1: State of Alaska v. Alfredo Chavez

(Case No: 4FA-22-02394CR)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Allison Baldock 510 2nd Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Kathryn "Katy" Mason 510 2nd Avenue Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 3: Patrick Roach 529 5th Ave #1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 2: State v. Eric Matthews

(Case No: 4FA-24-00845CR)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Cate Pierson 510 2nd Ave Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Eric Yff 529 5th Ave #1 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
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Case 3: Ryan Campbell v. Vanessa Marshall

(Case No: 4FA-17-02927CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Terri-Lynn Coleman 750 8th Avenue Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Joshua Bither 471 W 36th Avenue Ste. 202 Anchorage, Alaska 99503
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