



alaska judicial council

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Alaska Judicial Council

Retention Questionnaire

2026 Candidates for Judicial Retention

Full Name: Kelly J. Lawson

Court: Kenai Superior Court

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

- **Case work:** 95%
- **Administrative work, outreach, continuing education, etc:** 5%

1b. Superior Court Judges:

- **Criminal:** 40%
- **Delinquency:** 1%
- **Domestic Relations:** 40%
- **Child in Need of Aid:** 9%
- **Probate:** 1%
- **General Civil (Including Appeals):** 9%

1c. Number of jury trials/year: 4

1d. Number of non-jury trials/year: 25

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

I estimated my workload based on the actual number of cases as well as on how much time I estimate I attribute to each type of case.
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2. Please describe your participation on court/bar committees or other administrative activities during your current term of office.

I sit on the board for the local Kenai Peninsula Bar Association. I have helped host local bench/bar meetings when the deputy presiding judge is unavailable. I regularly cover ERP hearings and I am the sitting Henu Community Wellness Court State Judge.

I participated in the Success Inside and Out program at Hiland Mountain in 2024.

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

I attend all local bench/bar meetings for criminal, CINA, & domestic relations cases. I participate in the annual judicial conference, hosted by the Alaska Court system. I attend the annual Newer Judge Conference which is required for the first 3 years on the bench. I attended the two-week General Jurisdiction course at the National Judicial College. I attended the All Rise Conference in Houston in 2023 hosted on by the National Assoc. of Drug Court Professionals. I attended the 2024 Institute for New Juvenile and Family Court Judges in Reno, hosted by the Nat'l Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. I attended the 2024 DWI/Drug Court Training in Anchorage hosted by All Rise and the Alaska Therapeutic Court Office. I also participated in the Alaska Court System Mentor program for 1 year at the beginning of my service. I have also attended and participated in several other webinars relating primarily to therapeutic courts.

4. Please describe any public outreach activities.

I sat on a panel for ICWA Introductory Training for new ICWA workers, hosted by the Anchorage Native Justice Center in Anchorage in 2024.

I attend all local bench/bar meetings and any local activities provided by the local bar association, including First Friday activities.

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.

I find my work as a judicial officer very rewarding and humbling. I am constantly reminded of how important my work is in the daily lives of many different people in our community. I work hard to increase my knowledge everyday, through researching specific legal issues, reviewing recent published opinions and learning from my colleagues. I strive to be fair, calm and to provide an opportunity for people to be heard when they appear before me.

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.

I am very aware of the Victims' Rights Act, having worked with and for victims the majority of my legal career. At every hearing, especially sentencing hearings, I ensure the victim has been provided notice and an opportunity to be heard. I always ask the prosecutors to provide an update on victim notification to ensure their participation. If notice has not been provided, I will continue the hearing to ensure they are notified. If victims are present, I address them individually and ask for their input, comments or statements. I do my best to explain the process to victims in court and answer any questions I'm able to. In making my sentencing remarks and in determining an appropriate sentence, I always take into account the victim's input as well as the impact of the crime on the victim. I believe strongly in ensuring victims are treated with dignity, fairness and respect throughout the criminal justice process.

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?

No

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

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.

Being a Superior Court Judge is incredibly difficult yet incredibly rewarding. The impact I have on the people who appear before me each day is not something I take lightly. I work hard everyday to learn more and to become a better judicial officer. I would be honored to be able to continue as a judicial officer here in Kenai.
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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. David Doremire/John Spinka

(Case No: 3KN-22-00305/639CR)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Daniel Strigle Kenai DA, 120 Trading Bay Rd. #200 Kenai, Alaska 99611	Atty 2: Jason Weiner 1008 16th Ave. Ste. 200 Fairbanks, Alaska 9970	Atty 3: Moshe Zorea 1501 WEST 33RD AVENUE Anchorage, Alaska 99503
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Case 2: State of Alaska v. Marco Ramirez

(Case No: 3HO-23-00217R)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Jon Iannaccone Kenai DA, 120 Trading Bay Rd. #200 Kenai, Alaska 99611	Atty 2: Sarah Stewart Kenai PD, 130 Trading Bay Drive Ste 390 Kenai, Alaska 99611
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Case 3: Galaxy Seafoods v. Eric Sloth/Homer Marine

(Case No: 3HO-23-00007CI)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Connor Smith 510 L Street, Suite 500 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Tracy Hillhouse Price 807 G Street Suite 250 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Kendra Bowman 807 G Street Suite 250 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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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: Josh Merkes v. Samantha Merkes

(Case No: 3KN-22-00471CI)

Total Attorneys: 1

Atty 1: Shana Theiler 105 Trading Bay Rd Suite 103 Kenai, Alaska 99611
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Case 2: ITMO Michael Wiebelhaus v.

(Case No: 3KN-24-00144PR)

Total Attorneys: 1

Atty 1: Blaine Gilman 10672 Kenai Spur Highway Suite 112 Kenai, Alaska 99611
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Case 3: Sara Boyd v. Jonathan Boyd

(Case No: 3KN-23-00906CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Dunnington Babb 510 L St Ste 601 Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Atty 2: Nathan Henshaw 310 K Street Ste 306 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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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: State of Alaska v. Michael Fischer

(Case No: 3HO-24-00025CR)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Julie Matucheski Kenai DA, 120 Trading Bay Suite 200 Kenai, Alaska 99611	550 W. 8th Ave Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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Case 2: Thaddeus Henry v. Sara Henry

(Case No: 3KN-24-00987CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Roberta Erwin 429 L St Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Justin Eschbacher 845 F Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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Case 3: State of Alaska v. Dale Curtiss

(Case No: 3KN-25-00030CR)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: John Schroeder Kenai DA, 120 Trading Bay Suite 200 Kenai, Alaska 99611	Atty 2: Ila Clawson Kenai PD, 130 Trading Bay Drive Ste 390 Kenai, Alaska 99611
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