



alaska judicial council

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Alaska Judicial Council

Retention Questionnaire

2026 Candidates for Judicial Retention

Full Name: Laura Suzanne Hartz

Court: Anchorage 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:** 10%
- **Delinquency:** 0%
- **Domestic Relations:** 30%
- **Child in Need of Aid:** 20%
- **Probate:** 20%
- **General Civil (Including Appeals):** 20%

1c. Number of jury trials/year: 3

1d. Number of non-jury trials/year: 100

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

Myself and Judge Gandhir preside over CINA Therapeutic Court, a program designed to assist OCS-involved parents in accessing substance abuse treatment so that their children can safely return to their care.

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 Court Improvement Project (CIP) focused on improving outcomes in Child Welfare cases. I am also on the Steering Committee for CIP.

I am the Chair of the CINA Working Group.

I am on the Planning Committee for the Alaska Court System's Annual Success Inside Out event at Hiland Mountain Correctional.

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

April 2023: Admin 101 session--Security & Emergency Preparedness

September 2023: presided over UAA student simulated motion practice and oral arguments.

October 2023: attended the two-week General Jurisdiction training at the National Judicial College.

December 2023: Presenter at Family Law Section Meeting CLE

Fall 2023, Fall 2024, and Fall 2025: attended the Alaska Court system's annual Judicial Conference.

January 2024 & January 2025: Newer Judges Conference

January 2024 & January 2025: Co-Presented at CINA Year in Review ZOOM CLE.

April 2024: Presented at ZOOM Training: Best Practices for Judges Reviewing Placement of Youth in Treatment Facilities

March 2025: All Judges Meeting: Implementation of SCO 2038

March 2025: Co-Dependency and Addiction Webinar

4. Please describe any public outreach activities.

2023, 2024 and 2025: I have sworn in three classes of newly-trained Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs).

Spring 2024 and Spring 2025: with my colleagues on the bench, I have judged the final round of the High School Mock Trial Competition.

November 2024: moderated a panel for female inmates preparing for release at the annual Success Inside Out event at Hiland Mountain Correctional.

January 2024: volunteer at MLK Day legal clinic at the Mountain View Boys & Girls Club.

January 2024: volunteer at Mock Trial for Students of Mat-Su Middle College School

February 2024: attended a dinner hosted by Tlingit & Haida related to the relationship between state courts and tribal courts.

September 2024: I accompanied Susanne DiPietro to the Sand Lake Community Council meeting. I talked to the council members and community members about the responsibilities of a superior court judge in Anchorage.

January 2025: participated as a panelist on a Webinar entitled "Bringing Families Back Together" to educate foster parents about the goal of reunification in child welfare cases.

Spring 2025: I hosted Romig Middle School's Business Partnership Class in my courtroom. Myself, my in-court clerk, and law clerk each spoke about our respective roles. My in-court clerk was able to talk to students who enjoy working with technology about what she does. I think this is important because not all students who visit the courthouse dream of becoming attorneys or judges. I talked about my path to the bench and took questions from the students about my work. My law clerk and I spoke about the importance of academic honesty given advances in Artificial Intelligence.

December 2025: met with Community Justice Workers to discuss courtroom procedures for domestic violence protective proceedings.

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.

This is my first time standing for retention. It is not an understatement to say I learn new things every day in this job, and I always look forward to the opportunity to apply the things I have learned as the issues repeat themselves. Being a judge is equal parts challenging and immensely rewarding. I have developed ways of speaking with parties, particularly self-represented parties, about their rights, the applicable standard, etc., in plain English.

I endeavor to issue timely decisions, particularly after an evidentiary hearing. The best time to write an order and make a decision is when the evidence is fresh. As a general matter, I try to rule on things as they come in and limit the cases on my Under Advisement list to those things that take greater time, consideration, and research.

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.

At the time of this application, I have only sentenced one criminal defendant. Due to the nature of the case, there was not an identified victim. It was a crime of omission. I have handled other criminal trials but these are in the pre-sentencing phase.

Without question, the Court must consider the impact of the crime on the victim, their family, and the community.

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.

The Council will see that I am unable to fully fill out section 9(a). I have presided over six jury trials this term, but two of them are on appeal (one is a civil commitment and the second is a criminal trial) and two more are criminal cases that are pre-sentencing.

A fifth jury trial involved self-represented litigants on both sides. Each party previously had an attorney but by the time of trial they were both self-represented. One of the parties did not speak English, and at least one or two witnesses also required interpretation. I worked closely with Interpreter Services Coordinator Stefanie Burich from the Access to Justice Services for coordination of interpretation.

I asked each party for their voir dire questions in advance and I conducted the voir dire of the jury using the agreed upon questions. This streamlined things for prospective jurors and put each party on equal footing in terms of ensuring that the important questions were asked of jurors during selection. I mention this case on my retention application because of the amount of coordination and preparation the trial required to ensure due process and fairness for the parties.

Finally, I would like the Council to know that I have a handful of significant decisions--chiefly administrative appeals--that are currently on appeal to the Alaska Supreme Court and I am unable to include these on my retention application.

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: Allen v. Christine West

(Case No: 3AN-19-11816CI)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: Yale Metzger (deceased)	Atty 2: Daniel Pace 101 E. 9th Ave., Ste. 7A Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Alfred Clayton 500 L Street 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: ITMO V.S. v.

(Case No: 3AN-23-00453CN)

Total Attorneys: 4

Atty 1: Brittany Occhipinti 1031 W. 4th Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Stewart Merrill 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 525 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Erica Ranchoff 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 525 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Atty 4: Julie Hammond 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 525 Anchorage, Alaska 99501		

Case 2: ITMO: C.H. v.

(Case No: 3AN-22-0057CN)

Total Attorneys: 4

Atty 1: Reid Kurtz 1031 W. 4th Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Erika Kahill 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 101 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Troy Bittner 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 525 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Atty 4: Stephanie Schulling 900 W. 5th Ave., Ste. 525 Anchorage, Alaska 99501		

Case 3: Debra Roehl v. Harmon Roehl

(Case No: 3AN-23-07398CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Gary Eschbacher 718 Barrow Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Samantha Fleming 1016 W. 6th Ave., Ste. 403 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: Jane Doe v. Alaska Pacific University

(Case No: 3AN-24-081082CI)

Total Attorneys: 6

Atty 1: James J. Davis, Jr. 406 G Street, Ste. 207 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Gregory Fisher 880 H Street, Ste. 102 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Corey Dunn 880 H Street, Ste. 102 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Atty 4: Sarah Hance 600 University Street, Ste. 3200 Seattle, Washington 98101	Atty 5: Justin Bolster 401 Union Street, Ste. 1900 Seattle, Washington 98101	Atty 6: John Tiemessen 411 Fourth Ave, Ste. 300 Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Case 2: Tchaya v. ARC of Anchorage

(Case No: 3AN-22-04561CI)

Total Attorneys: 2

Atty 1: Isaac Zorea 1501 W. 33rd Anchorage, Alaska 99503	Atty 2: Pamela Weiss 1029 W. Third Ave, Ste. 400 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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Case 3: Yeon Kim v. State of Alaska

(Case No: 3AN-22-07376CI)

Total Attorneys: 4

Atty 1: Justin Nelson 100 Cushman Street Fairbanks, Alaska 99701	Atty 2: Dylan Krueger 123 W. 4th St., Ste. 600 Juneau, Alaska 99801	Atty 3: Eric Sallinger 550 W. 7th Ave., Ste. 1940 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Atty 4: Leigh Dickey 1016 W. 6th Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501		

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. B Merry Studios

(Case No: 3AN-22-04436CI)

Total Attorneys: 3

Atty 1: John Haley 1031 W. Fourth Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 2: Theresa Rava 1031 W. Fourth Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501	Atty 3: Ian Engelbeck 1031 W. Fourth Ave., Ste. 200 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
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Laura Hartz
Attachment to Retention Application

9(c): Case Number 1 (Did Not Go To Trial)

Jane Doe v. Alaska Pacific University 3AN-24-081082CI

Attorney #7:

Caitlin Shortell

911 W 8th Ave. #204, Anchorage AK 99501

9(d): Optional Case Number 1

State of Alaska v. B Merry Studios 3AN-22-04436CI

Attorney #4:

John Young

Address: 601 Union Street, Ste. 4100, Seattle WA 98101