



alaska judicial council

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May 23, 2025

RE: District Court and Court of Appeals Vacancies

Dear Member of the Alaska Bar Association:

The Alaska Judicial Council is soliciting applications for the **Alaska Court of Appeals, and Bethel District Court**. This letter includes detailed position descriptions containing essential information about the positions. Applicants may apply for any of the positions, or multiple positions on the same form, if desired. For more information, please contact the Alaska Judicial Council at 279-2526, or by e-mail at sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us.

The legal qualifications and annual salaries of judges on these courts are listed in the attached position descriptions. Judges also receive personal leave as established by the Administrative Rules of Court, state-paid health and dental benefits, and judicial retirement system benefits.

An application form for these positions may be obtained by writing or calling the Alaska Judicial Council. Application forms may also be obtained on-line by visiting the Council's website: www.ajc.state.ak.us. The form was recently updated, so please make sure you include all questions if you previously applied and are using a saved application.

Completed applications for all positions must be received by the Alaska Judicial Council no later than 3:00 p.m. on June 27, 2025.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susanne DiPietro".

Susanne DiPietro
Executive Director

Encl: Judicial Position Descriptions

To ensure receipt of the survey on the applicants for these positions, be sure that the email address you have on file with the Alaska Bar Association is current. To prevent survey emails from being diverted as spam, add ajc@gmailserver.com as a safe sender in your email account.

Judicial Position Description

Alaska judges must conform their conduct to the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct and the laws of Alaska and the United States. They must be familiar with Alaska law, procedure, and trial practice. To be successful, a judge must be proficient in understanding oral and written communications, and must effectively communicate orally and in writing with parties, attorneys, members of the public, and court employees. They must be familiar with Alaska law, procedure, and trial practice. Judges must regularly employ a high level of analytical legal reasoning, must possess unimpaired judgment, and must be able to concentrate on and evaluate evidence and legal arguments. Judges must be willing and able to render timely and impartial decisions, without regard for popular sentiment. They must treat parties, attorneys, the public, and court employees with fairness, courtesy, and respect, and they must work effectively under pressure. In addition to presiding over cases, Alaska judges are expected to serve on court committees working to improve the administration of justice in the state. Alaska judges must conform their conduct to the Alaska Code of Judicial Conduct and the laws of Alaska and the United States.

The working environment is a courtroom and office setting. Alaska judges typically sit in court or in chambers for long periods of time, but sitting is not an essential requirement of the job; some judges prefer to stand or make comparable adjustments for their individual needs. Judges may be required to travel, including travel to rural areas, often by small airplane. They may be temporarily reassigned to different court locations within the state. Judges may share weekend duty with other judicial officers and are expected to work closely with court clerks.

Judicial salaries vary depending on level of court and location. In addition to salary, judges receive personal leave as established by the Administrative Rules of Court, state-paid health and dental benefits, and judicial retirement system benefits.

Alaska Court of Appeals (Corrected)

Four judges sit on the Alaska Court of Appeals. Three-judge panels consider and decide cases. An intermediate appellate court, the Alaska Court of Appeals has appellate jurisdiction in actions and proceedings commenced in the superior court involving criminal prosecution, post-conviction relief, delinquency matters, extradition, habeas corpus, probation and parole, and bail. It also hears sentence appeals. For more information about the court's jurisdiction see AS 22.07.020. According to the Alaska Court System's fiscal year 2024 annual report, 235 cases were filed in the Alaska Court of Appeals in that period including 160 merit appeals, 26 sentence appeals, 35 petitions for review or hearing, and 14 original applications/bail appeals.

Court of appeals judges must have excellent communication skills, both oral and written. They must be capable of a very high level of analytical reasoning. They must possess unimpaired judgment at all times. They must thoroughly evaluate briefs, motions and arguments and render decisions in a timely and even-handed manner. Judges must treat colleagues, parties, attorneys, employees and the public with fairness, courtesy, and respect. They must work effectively under pressure. Judges must be familiar with Alaska law, procedure, and precedent. Judges must conform their conduct to the Code of Judicial Conduct and to the laws of the State of Alaska and the United States. Judges often must sit (or stand) at a desk or bench for prolonged periods of time.

The principal office of the Court of Appeals is in Anchorage.¹ The new judge may maintain an office in Anchorage, Fairbanks, or Juneau. Sessions of the court of appeals are held as established by the chief judge, after consultation with the court of appeals, and at locations designated by the chief judge after consultation with the court of appeals and the chief justice. Judges may travel to hear cases in other locations. Judges may be assigned to other courts as needed. Each court of appeals judge is assisted by, and is responsible for the supervision of, two law clerks and a judicial assistant.

Court of appeals judges stand for retention at the first general election more than three years after initial appointment and every eight years thereafter as provided in AS 15.35.053. The annual salary of a court of appeals judge in Anchorage is \$220,916. A judge who maintains an office in Juneau or Fairbanks is eligible for the geographic differential for those areas.

District Court Judge

District court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.15.160. They must: be a citizen of the United States and of the State of Alaska; be at least 21 years of age; be a resident of Alaska for at least five years immediately preceding appointment; and either (1) have engaged in the active practice of law, as defined in AS 22.05.070, for not less than three years immediately preceding appointment and be licensed to practice law in Alaska at the time of appointment, or (2) have served for at least seven years as a magistrate in the state. In addition, Administrative Rule 19.1 requires that a magistrate who seeks appointment as a district court judge be a graduate of a law school accredited or approved by the Council of Legal Education of the American Bar Association or the Association of American Law Schools. District court judges stand for retention at the first general election held more than two years after their initial appointment, and every four years thereafter. Further information regarding the jurisdiction, authority and duties of district court judges may be found at AS 22.15.

Bethel District Court, Fourth Judicial District **(Corrected)**

A district court position is open in Bethel due to the appointment of Judge William T. Montgomery to the Bethel Superior Court. Bethel has one district court judge who presides over a limited jurisdiction trial court serving the Yukon-Koyukon Delta in the Fourth Judicial District. According to data available

¹ Although the principal office is in Anchorage, Administrative Rule 17.5 as amended by Supreme Court Order No. 1960, eff. May 14, 2020 allows one judge to maintain an office in Fairbanks and one judge to maintain an office in Juneau.

in the Alaska Court System Annual Report for FY 2024,² 1,176 cases were filed in the Bethel District Court, including 577 misdemeanors, 218 minor offenses, 31 small claims, 313 civil protective orders, and 37 general civil cases. A Bethel District Court judge hears both criminal and civil proceedings. The annual salary of a district court judge in Bethel is \$233,320 (this amount includes a geographic pay differential).

² *Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2024: July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024*, 59. The report is available at <https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/docs/fy24-statistics.pdf>.