



# alaska judicial council

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## Press Release

August 20, 2018

The Alaska Judicial Council recommends that Alaskans vote “YES” to retain 15 judges eligible to appear on the ballot in 2018. This press release explains the Council’s evaluation process and presents its recommendations.

The Council’s review of judges’ performances, and its recommendations based on this review, are for Alaskan voters as they decide in the general election on November 6, 2018 whether judges should serve another term in office.

To help voters make informed decisions about judges on the ballot, the Alaska Judicial Council reviewed detailed performance information about each of the judges standing for retention. Based on the results of these evaluations, the Alaska Judicial Council makes the following recommendations to the voters.

### Vote “YES” to retain

The Alaska Judicial Council unanimously recommends that Alaskans vote “Yes” to retain these judges eligible to appear on the ballot in 2018:

- Superior Court Judge William B. Carey, Ketchikan (First Judicial District);
- District Court Judge Kevin G. Miller, Ketchikan (First Judicial District);
- District Court Judge Kirsten Swanson, Juneau (First Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge Michael D. Corey, Anchorage (Third Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge William F. Morse, Anchorage (Third Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge Herman G. Walker, Jr., Anchorage (Third Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge Michael L. Wolverton, Anchorage (Third Judicial District);
- District Court Judge Jo-Ann M. Chung, Anchorage (Third Judicial District);

- District Court Judge Brian K. Clark, Anchorage (Third Judicial District);
- District Court Judge William L. Estelle, Palmer (Third Judicial District);\*
- District Court Judge Sharon A.S. Illsley, Kenai (Third Judicial District);
- District Court Judge John W. Wolfe, Palmer (Third Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge Paul R. Lyle, Fairbanks (Fourth Judicial District);
- Superior Court Judge Michael P. McConahy, Fairbanks (Fourth Judicial District);
- District Court Judge Benjamin A. Seekins, Fairbanks (Fourth Judicial District);

\*Council members James Torgerson and Lynne Gallant abstained from voting on Judge Estelle’s retention in order to avoid a conflict of interest.

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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.

- Loretta Bullard, public member from Nome;
- Lynne Gallant, public member from Anchorage;
- Galen Paine, attorney member from Sitka;
- Dave Parker, public member from Wasilla;
- Geraldine Simon, attorney member from Fairbanks;
- James Torgerson, 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 Joel H. Bolger, presides as chair ex officio, and votes only when his vote can change the result.

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The Alaska Judicial Council conducted an in-depth evaluation of the judicial performance of each judge standing for retention. For its recommendations this year, the Council evaluated the judges’ legal ability, impartiality and fairness, integrity, temperament, diligence, and overall performance, including judgment and ethical conduct. To obtain this information:

- The Council surveyed thousands of Alaskans including peace and probation officers, court employees, attorneys, jurors, social workers and guardians ad litem.
- The Council solicited specific written feedback from attorneys who appeared before the judges in recent cases.
- The Council tracked how often a judge was disqualified from presiding over a case and how often a trial judge was affirmed or reversed on appeal.
- The Council examined any civil or criminal litigation involving a judge, a judge's credit information; APOC and court system conflict-of-interest statements filed by a judge; any disciplinary files or actions involving a judge; and whether a judge's paycheck was withheld for an untimely decision.
- The Council listened to court proceedings, and interviewed judges, attorneys, court staff, and others as necessary.
- The Council solicited feedback from the public about judges on its website and held a statewide public hearing.

Alaskan voters can learn more about the Alaska Judicial Council's evaluation of the performance of judges by visiting the Council's website at:

<http://www.ajc.state.ak.us/2018-retention-election>

The State of Alaska's Official Elections Pamphlets, published by the Division of Elections in October, will include the Council's recommendations and summaries of the Council's evaluations.