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Judicial Position Description

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.

District Court Judge

District court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.15.160. 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.

Palmer District Court, Third Judicial District

A District Court position will be open in Palmer due to the forthcoming retirement of Judge William L. Estelle, effective May 5. Palmer has three district court judges who preside over a limited jurisdiction trial court serving Palmer in the Third Judicial District. According to data available in the Alaska Court System Annual Report for FY 2019,¹ 114,121 cases were filed in the Palmer District Court, including 2,324 misdemeanors, 9,212 minor offenses, 797 small claims, 843 civil protective orders, and 945 general civil cases. A Palmer District Court judge hears both criminal and civil proceedings. The annual salary of a district court judge in Palmer is \$160,856.

¹ Available at <https://public.courts.alaska.gov/web/admin/docs/fy19.pdf>.