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Judicial Position Descriptions

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.

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.

Superior Court Judge

Superior court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.10.090. They must: be a citizen of the United States and of the State of Alaska; be a resident of Alaska for five years immediately preceding appointment; have engaged in the active practice of law, as defined in AS 22.05.070, for not less than five years immediately preceding appointment; and must be licensed to practice law in Alaska at the time of appointment. Superior court judges stand for retention at the first general election held more than three years after their initial appointment and every six years thereafter. Further information regarding the jurisdiction, authority, and duties of superior court judges may be found at AS 22.10.

Fairbanks Superior Court, Fourth Judicial District

Fairbanks has six superior court judges who preside over a general jurisdiction trial court in the Fourth Judicial District. According to the Alaska Court System's fiscal year 2019 annual report, 2,760 cases were filed in the Fairbanks Superior Court, including 716 felony cases, 367 child-in-need-of-aid matters, 59 delinquency matters, 682 domestic relations matters, 253 general civil matters, and 683 probate matters. Fairbanks Superior Court judges hear both criminal and civil matters. They are expected to preside over cases in rural communities, including Bethel, as needed. The annual salary of a Fairbanks Superior Court judge is \$192,715.

District Court Judge

District court judges must meet the qualifications set out at AS 22.15.160 and Administrative Rule 19.1. 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.

Fairbanks District Court, Fourth Judicial District

Fairbanks has three district court judges who preside over a limited jurisdiction trial court serving Fairbanks in the Fourth Judicial District. According to the Alaska Court System's fiscal year 2019 annual report, 11,513 cases were filed in the Fairbanks District Court, including 2,898 misdemeanors, 6,084 minor offenses, 666 small claims, 786 civil protective orders, and 1,079 general civil cases. Fairbanks District Court judges hear both criminal and civil proceedings. The annual salary of a Fairbanks District Court judge is \$163,855.