



alaska judicial council

510 L Street, Suite 450, Anchorage, Alaska 99501-1295 (907) 279-2526 FAX (907) 276-5046
http://www.ajc.state.ak.us E-Mail: postmaster@ajc.state.ak.us

Press Release

Contact: Susanne DiPietro, Executive Director
Alaska Judicial Council
510 L Street, Suite 450
Anchorage AK 99501
(907) 279-2526
sdipietro@ajc.state.ak.us
www.ajc.state.ak.us

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Announcing Applicants

Palmer and Bethel District Courts

Three attorneys have applied to the Alaska Judicial Council for a position on the Palmer District Court, and two attorneys have applied for a position on the Bethel District Court. Applicants for the judgeships will be evaluated by the Council's seven members (the chief justice, three non-attorney members, and three attorney members). Comprehensive background investigations, a survey of Alaska Bar members, and personal interviews with the applicants are all part of the evaluations, according to the Council's Executive Director, Susanne DiPietro. Interviews with applicants and public hearings will be held in August 2024. The Council will nominate two or more applicants for each vacancy to send to the governor, after which the governor will have 45 days to make appointments from the Council's lists of nominees.

The applicants for the Palmer District Court are:

Chris Darnall: Mr. Darnall has been an Alaska resident for 32½ years and has practiced law for 6 years. He graduated from State University of New York Buffalo Law School in 2016 and is currently an assistant attorney general with the Office of Special Prosecutions in Anchorage.

Derek M. Koehler: Magistrate Judge Koehler has been an Alaska resident for 39 years and has practiced law for 10½ years. He graduated from Widener University School of Law in 2013 and is currently a magistrate judge in Palmer.

Glenn J. Shidner: Mr. Shidner has been an Alaska resident for 8 years and has practiced law for 8 years. He graduated from Florida State University College of Law in 2015 and is currently an Assistant United States Attorney in Anchorage.

The applicants for the Bethel District Court are:

Jessica Ruth Haines: Ms. Haines has been an Alaskan resident for 7½ years and has practiced law 7½ years. She graduated from Emory University School of Law in 2016 and is currently an assistant district attorney in Bethel.

Colleen Baxter: Ms. Baxter has been an Alaska resident for 54 years and has practiced law for 26½ years. She graduated from Temple University, Beasley School of Law in 1996, and is currently a magistrate judge in Kotzebue.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THESE APPLICANTS IS ENCOURAGED DURING THE EVALUATION PHASE OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK. TO COMMENT, OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT SUSANNE DIPIETRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALASKA JUDICIAL COUNCIL, 510 L STREET, SUITE 450, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99501-1295, (907) 279-2526.

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