



# alaska judicial council

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## Press Release

December 5, 2011

### Fairbanks District Court Vacancy Fourth Judicial District

The Alaska Judicial Council met on December 3-4, 2011 to interview applicants for a position on the Fairbanks District Court.

Following its meeting in Fairbanks the Alaska Judicial Council announced that **Matthew Christian, Gene L. Gustafson, Bethany Spalding Harbison and Ben Seekins** were nominated as the most qualified applicants to fill the Fairbanks District Court judicial vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Raymond M. Funk. The Governor now has 45 days in which to make the appointment from among these nominees.

The Judicial Council is required to nominate the most qualified applicants applying for a judicial vacancy. (The framers of our Constitution referred to this standard as the "best available timber.") Failure of the Council to nominate an applicant does not mean the applicant is unqualified.

The Council is a citizens' commission created by the Alaska Constitution composed of three attorneys, three non-attorneys and the Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court. The Council completes an extensive investigation and evaluation of judicial applicants. The Council reviews each applicant's education, experience, bar discipline and credit records, participation in community activities, and other records. It asks every member of the Alaska Bar to evaluate the applicant, encourages the public to submit comments, and interviews the applicant.

**Nominees for the Fairbanks District Court are:**

**Matthew Christian:** Magistrate Christian has been an Alaska resident for 9½ years, and has practiced law for 9½ years. He graduated from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in 2001, and is currently a magistrate/master in Kenai.

**Gene L. Gustafson:** Mr. Gustafson has been an Alaska resident for 14 years, and has practiced law for 31 years. He graduated from University of Idaho, College of Law in 1980, and is currently an assistant attorney general in Fairbanks.

**Bethany Spalding Harbison:** Magistrate Harbison has been an Alaska resident for 18½ years, and has practiced law for 18 years. She graduated from the Harvard Law School in 1993, and is currently a magistrate/master in Fairbanks.

**Ben Seekins:** Mr. Seekins has been an Alaska resident for 37½ years, and has practiced law for 9 years. He graduated from Gonzaga Law School in 2002, and is currently an assistant district attorney in Fairbanks.