

## **How does Alaska's merit selection process work?**

As the name suggests, Alaska's judicial selection process focuses on merit—choosing the best, most qualified person for the job. To do that, Alaska's constitution establishes an independent citizen's commission called the Alaska Judicial Council. The Judicial Council is made up of a mix of non-lawyers and lawyers from all around the state. Half are chosen by the governor and the other half are not.

Lawyers who want to be judges apply for the job by submitting a detailed job application, including references from judges and other lawyers. The Judicial Council evaluates those applications. It surveys judges and lawyers across the state about the applicants' competence, experience, intelligence, and temperament; and it interviews all the applicants. The Judicial Council then chooses the most qualified applicants from the pool, and submits those top names to the Governor, who chooses the new judge from the list of nominees.

This system works well because the Judicial Council's non-political nature and process allows it to focus on which applicants are likely to make the very best judges, without needing to consider politics or money.