



*Alaska Court System
Annual Report FY 2024*

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Alaska Court Locations, FY 2024



Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2024

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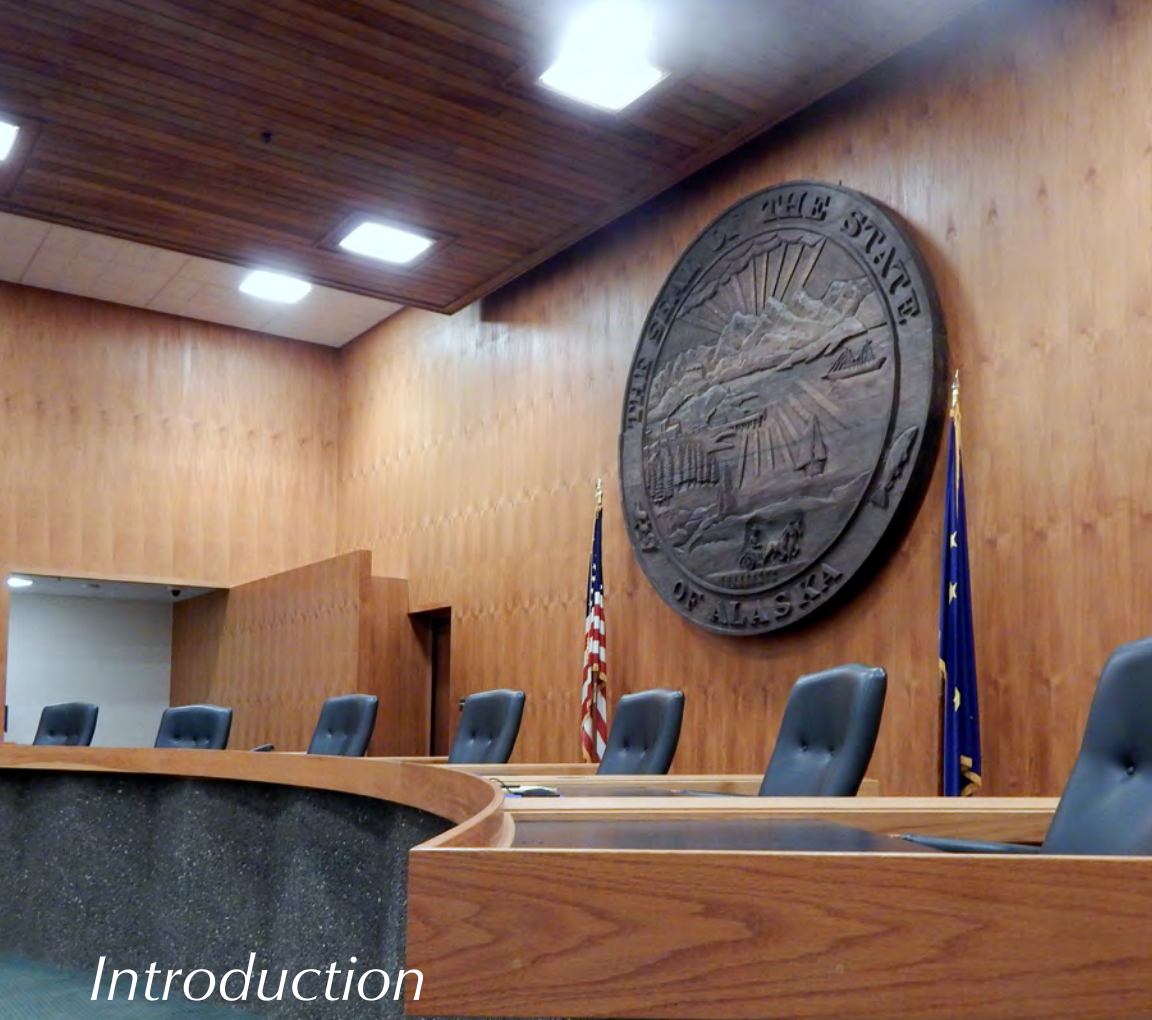
A bookmarked PDF version of this annual report is available on the Alaska Court System website at <https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>.



Denali, Denali National Park and Preserve (Fourth Judicial District)

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Introduction

Great Seal of the State of Alaska and dais, Alaska Supreme Court courtroom, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage

The Alaska Court System

The government of the State of Alaska is divided into three separate but equal branches: the *executive*, the *legislative*, and the *judicial*. By providing for checks and balances, this division prevents the concentration of governmental power in one or another function. The federal government and the governments of most other states are also structured in this way.

Although the terms *judicial branch* and *court system* are often used interchangeably, in fact, the Alaska judicial branch contains three separate entities: the *Alaska Court System*, the *Alaska Judicial Council*, and the *Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct*, each with a function established in the state constitution.

Alaska has a unified, centrally-administered court system, totally funded by the state. Municipal governments do not maintain separate court systems. There are four levels of courts in the Alaska Court System, each with different powers, duties, and responsibilities. The *Superior Court* and *District Court* are *trial courts*, which initially hear and decide court cases. The *Supreme Court* and *Court of Appeals* are *appellate courts*, which review and decide appeals from decisions made by the trial courts. Title 22 of the Alaska Statutes sets out the jurisdiction and responsibilities of each court.

The Supreme Court and the Superior Court were established in the state constitution. In 1959, the legislature created a District Court for each judicial district and granted power to the Supreme Court to increase or decrease the number of District Court judges. In 1980, the legislature created the Court of Appeals.

The Chief Justice of the Alaska Supreme Court is the administrative head of the Alaska Court System. An administrative director is appointed by the chief justice with concurrence of the Supreme Court. The director supervises the administration of all courts in the state.

The Supreme Court sets out the rules governing the administration of all courts and the rules of practice and procedure for civil and criminal cases.



Alaska Supreme Court courtroom, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage

How Alaskans Choose Their Judges

The Alaska constitution provides for the selection of judges by merit; that is, judges are selected on the basis of their qualifications, rather than on their political or social connections. Alaska was one of the first states to adopt merit selection of judges. Today, over thirty other states select some or all of their judges in this way.

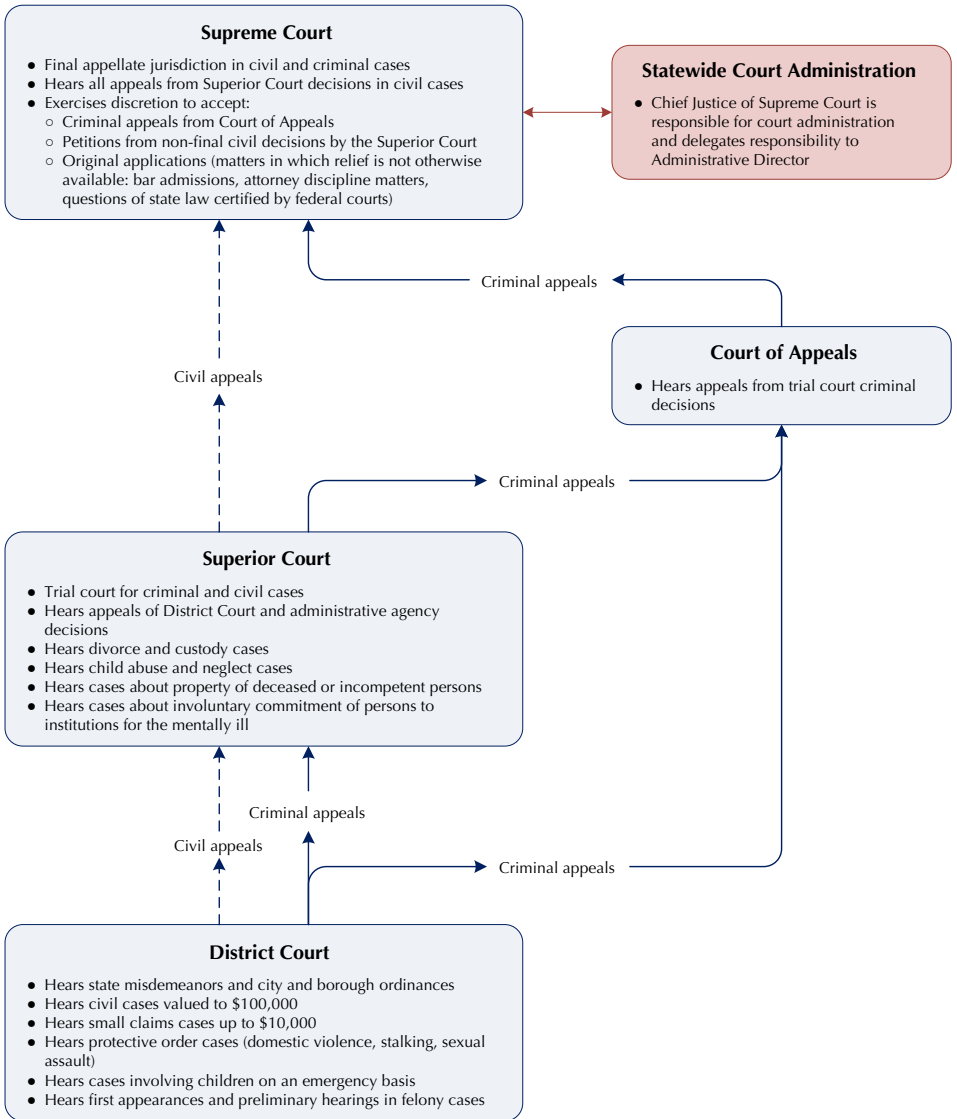
The Alaska Judicial Council, an independent citizens' commission, investigates and evaluates applicants for judicial positions for all courts except magistrate judge courts. The council sends the names of the most qualified applicants to the governor. The governor must make an appointment from this list. (Magistrate judges are selected according to a different process.)



Totem poles, Nesbett Courthouse, Anchorage (Third Judicial District)

After serving for a specified period of time, all justices and judges in Alaska must stand regularly for approval by voters on a non-partisan ballot in a general election. This is called *retention*. The Judicial Council evaluates the performance of judicial officers standing for retention election. The evaluation includes a survey of attorneys, peace and probation officers, court employees, and others regarding the conduct of individual judges. Prior to the election date, the council provides detailed information from this evaluation to the public and makes recommendations regarding the retention of individual judges.

Alaska Court System Structure





Year in Review

Introduction

The Alaska Court System is pleased to present its FY 2024 annual report to the Alaska Legislature and all Alaska residents. The court system serves everyone in the state under the framework established by the Alaska and U.S. constitutions and according to our mission.

In this report we provide a broad overview of the spectrum of court business: a list of the judicial officers and senior administrators who served during FY24; a discussion of various court programs; summary budget information, and highlights of case data. The online version of the report contains comprehensive case data (<http://www.courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>).



Gulls, Gulkana River (Third Judicial District)



Dutch Harbor and Unalaska (Third Judicial District)

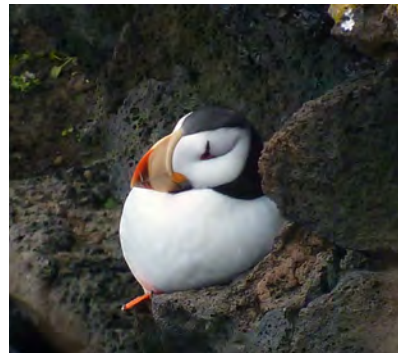
Continuing Changes, Post-Pandemic

The court system has continued to adapt its operations post-pandemic. It is giving priority to reducing the backlog in criminal cases due to the pandemic by exploring new approaches to case management.

In addition, through the statewide Criminal Justice Working Group (CJWG), court administrators are once again meeting with leadership from state agencies and departments to address administrative issues involved in the criminal justice case process.

Also in the aftermath of the pandemic, the court system now permits more extensive use of remote participation through video and telephones in routine proceedings. In FY24, the Supreme Court issued SCO 2018, setting standards for behavior in remote proceedings. The order requires that all participants in remote proceedings observe the same rules for behavior as expected in courtrooms.

The ever-increasing impact of technology on judicial matters also has implications for judicial conduct. As such, it is one area being addressed by the court system as it revises its Code of Judicial Ethics. We address the revision of the code in the next section.



*Horned puffin, St. Paul Island
(Third Judicial District)*

Code of Judicial Conduct

The Code of Judicial Conduct sets forth the ethical standards required of Alaska’s judicial officers. After a lengthy collaborative process, the Alaska Supreme Court is currently reviewing a proposed revision of the code that will offer a more logical, functional and helpful structure. The revision also addresses the dramatic technological changes of the last decades: electronic communications, social media, and the internet.

The current Alaska code has been in place for twenty-five years. When adopted, it reflected the 1990 American Bar Association (ABA) Model Code of Judicial Conduct. Following a Special Order of the Chief Justice in 2019, a committee began work on the revision. The Code of Judicial Conduct Committee has used the most recent ABA model code, published in 2007, as a basis for its work over the last several years, with the proposed revision reflecting modifications and refinements tailored for Alaska.

It is anticipated that the Supreme Court will finish its preliminary review in 2024. The proposed code will circulate for comment from judicial officers throughout the state, and the court system will post it for public comment in 2025. The committee will review all responses received during the comment period and issue its recommendations to the Supreme Court. After reviewing the committee’s recommendations, the Supreme Court will decide the final language for the revised code.

Communication with Alaskans

Keeping the public informed and facilitating public access to court proceedings are important aspects of the court system’s work. The court communicates through its website, social media, and press releases. It answers direct questions and requests from citizens and the media on judicial matters, court operations, and case records and data.

Public Access

Court communication with the Alaska public encompasses facilitating public access to judicial proceedings. Keeping trials and other proceedings open helps to ensure transparency and integrity in judicial work. Most court processes are open to the general public and the media, with courtrooms containing designated spaces for observers. In addition, based on experience gained during the covid pandemic, the Alaska Supreme Court has decided to continue regular livestreaming of certain types of

proceedings. This broadens public access, particularly for those Alaskans who cannot easily travel to court sites. The court system now has its own streaming server: <https://stream.akcourts.gov/>.

In general, the courts will stream hearings and proceedings, including trials, on matters of safety and welfare; economic, environmental, and community well-being; and governmental matters, including elections. Criminal trials, except those involving sexual offenses, may also be livestreamed. Oral arguments before the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals are livestreamed. Some other types of cases in which the confidentiality of the parties is protected, such as Child in Need of Aid cases and delinquency hearings, are not livestreamed. (Video streams are not archived and are not available after the conclusion of the proceeding.)

Website

The court system's website (<https://courts.alaska.gov/>) is a gateway to information about court operations. The site presents detailed information on the broad spectrum of court operations and services — timely notices and alerts, court calendars, court locations, jury service, hearings and trials, self-help programs, fine payments, small claims, probate, family law, appeals, minor offenses, guardianships and conservatorships, and language interpretation. It is an orientation point for anyone seeking assistance from the courts.

The Media and Community website section (<https://courts.alaska.gov/media/index.htm>) offers links to materials particularly relevant to the media as well as the general public: most-requested case files; annual reports and summary statistical data; bench-press resources; media liaison contact information; and alert notices. This section also covers outreach efforts such as Supreme Court LIVE, Law Day, and the Color of Justice program.

Social Media

To complement the website, the court system also utilizes several social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Facebook is a vehicle for up-to-date information on court operations, schedule changes, special events, judicial appointments, judicial decisions, and employment opportunities. Facebook also provides links to other resources, such as educational videos and classes on various topics.

The court also uses X for press releases, updates on cases, and timely notices. Instagram provides a pictorial record of court events and functions, and LinkedIn provides information about court employment opportunities.

Jurors and Juries

Both the Alaska and the U.S. constitutions guarantee the right to trial by jury. Several of the court system adaptations required to meet this guarantee during the covid pandemic demonstrated an effectiveness that has warranted their adoption as ordinary practices post-pandemic. They have bettered the administration of the jury selection process.

A Supreme Court Order effective early in FY 2024 established that:

- The number of potential jurors requested for a trial is, with some exceptions, limited by trial type.
- Jurors can now request to be excused through the use of the online juror dashboard.
- Judges now conduct jury selection with smaller panels brought into

FY24 Jury Figures

In FY24, 19,064 Alaskans appeared for juror duty across the state — 16,167 for trial juries and 2,897 for grand juries. The total figure is somewhat higher than in FY23, but still lower than the approximately 23,000 who appeared in FY19, the last full fiscal year before the start of the pandemic.

The court summoned jurors for 629 trials in FY24, with 3,647 people sworn into service. These figures cover all types of trials: civil and criminal trials in both Superior and District Court, as well as presumptive death, probate, and delinquency trials. Of these, 510 cases actually went to trial across the state, while the remainder folded — that is, the trial did not occur, usually because the defendant agreed to a plea arrangement.

Juror expenses totaled just under \$2 million in FY24. Of this total, slightly more than \$1.5 million was juror pay. Travel, lodging, and meals cost \$461,000. Trials in Bethel, where jurors travel by air from villages scattered across the large region, accounted for almost half this amount.

The court system uses a numerically random system governed by state laws and Alaska Rules of Court in summoning potential jurors. A juror must be an Alaska resident, at least eighteen years old, of sound mind and in possession of natural faculties, and able to speak or read English. The list of applicants for the Permanent Fund Dividend serves as the basis for identifying state residents.

the courtroom in time-staggered groups, with time for jury selection limited.

- Peremptory challenges are exercised per panel or by individual juror.
- When possible, pretrial motions should be resolved before jurors are brought into the courtroom.

The Work of Grand Juries

Grand juries sit in twelve locations across the state. Each jury comprises twelve to eighteen people. During its term, a jury will usually consider multiple criminal cases. The term a grand juror serves varies from location to location. Under the state constitution, the work of Alaskan grand juries is twofold: its most commonly exercised function involves criminal matters; the second, more infrequently employed function, is to investigate and report on matters relevant to public welfare and safety.

Criminal Matters

In its most common work, a grand jury considers whether a felony crime has been committed under state law and whether enough evidence exists to charge an individual with that crime. With a possible felony criminal charge, a prosecutor describes the events and situations to be considered and the laws that may have been violated, identifies the person possibly to be charged, calls witnesses, and presents evidence.

A grand jury does not determine the guilt of an individual; rather, it decides whether there is sufficient evidence to charge an individual with a particular crime. If the jury determines that probable cause exists to warrant a charge, the prosecutor will prepare an indictment — the charging document — to be presented to a judge. Once the indictment has been issued, the criminal trial case process begins.

Investigative Function

A grand jury in Alaska also has the power to investigate and report on matters affecting public safety and welfare. Such matters must involve the welfare of the public as a whole. The investigative power does not extend to matters primarily affecting an individual.

In conducting an investigation, a grand jury can subpoena and question witnesses, assemble information, write reports, and make recommendations. A prosecutor guides the investigative grand jury's work, explaining points of law.

Criminal Rule 6.1 defines the processes for initiating a grand jury investigation.

Juror utilization data assembled by the court system shows a drop in “unused jurors” — the number of jurors who appeared for jury selection and were not seated, preempted by the parties, or excused for cause. In addition, the time potential jurors are waiting has lessened.

The juror dashboard, accessed via the court’s website, now plays an extensive role in the first stages of the jury selection process. It permits the online completion of the initial qualifying questionnaire. In addition, it allows potential jurors to check their status, submit requests for excusal or deferment, upload documents, and check local court information. Excusals for hardship can be handled without needing to come to the courthouse. In some locations, challenges for cause can be handled before a potential juror comes to the courthouse.

Besides linking to the juror dashboard, the jury website page (<https://courts.alaska.gov/jury/index.htm>) provides access to videos and handbooks on jury service, links to articles concerning the work of juries, and practical

information on matters like parking and courthouse security.

The court system is also continuing to expand its use of email and texting to communicate with jurors; and it uses social media to provide timely information on events such as closings or delays.

The court system will continue to collect data on juror utilization rates, times needed to select a jury, and trial fold rates in order to improve its administration of jury selection. (In a fold, the trial does not occur, even though a jury is in place, often because a plea arrangement is reached at the last moment.)



Birch woods, Chatanika River (Fourth Judicial District)

Scamming

Developments in artificial intelligence and in other areas of communication technology are making scamming more and more sophisticated. In particular, there seems to be an increase in the number of aggressive scams focused on jury duty, both in Alaska and across the entire country. With potential jurors, the scammers play on uncertainty, confusion, fear, and lack of knowledge about court system procedures. Potential victims, who may have missed a jury duty date, receive a phone call informing them that they are being fined for non-appearance. They are told that non-payment of the fine may result in arrest. Using realistic details that scramble fact with fiction, the caller requests payment of the fine via gift cards, credit cards, or other ways of money transfer. The caller may impersonate a police officer or reference a judge's order.

Another scam uses a convincingly faked email notice regarding jury duty to induce the recipient to click on a non-court-related link. Again, the notice is designed to induce urgency and fear in the recipient by threatening fines or imprisonment for failure to respond.

Other scams have involved pleas for people to post bail money for a relative or acquaintance being held in jail.

In reality, court fines are always paid in court. The court never asks for payment of any fines via phone call or email. Also, no fine is assessed for non-appearance for jury duty.

To combat the scamming, the court places notices of known recent scamming approaches on its website and social media accounts. It has also produced a warning poster for display in public settings.



Hooper Bay (Fourth Judicial District)

Law Library

The Alaska State Court Law Library provides legal information resources for the entire state. It is the primary law library open to the general public as well as to legal practitioners. The library system includes three branches staffed by professional librarians: in Anchorage, Juneau, and Fairbanks. These facilities are open to the public, with regular hours. Smaller court sites are connected to the library system via public computers. The library's portal page permits searches of the general catalog and access to statutes, law reviews and journals, appellate court opinions, and other electronic resources.

In FY 2024, in partnership with the U.S. District Court Law Library, the state law library contracted with HeinOnline for the digitization of legislative histories for the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). These histories consist of fifty-six volumes — forty-one volumes for ANILCA and fifteen for ANCSA. Upon completion of the project, the full histories will be accessible via HeinOnline in all law library locations.

Also in FY24, the law library updated and reorganized the court system's three-judge sentencing panel web page. Panel decisions are now organized by the trial court case number. When available, both the panel decision and the referring decision are included. The decisions of the panel are available in PDF.



Alaska State Court Law Library, Boney Courthouse, Anchorage (Third Judicial District)

The law library participates in the Federal Depository Library Program (FLDP), a national network of over one thousand institutions that provide public access to federal government publications. In FY24, the General Publishing Office announced a move to a Digital FDLP, with a significant reduction in the number of print copies available for distribution. Starting in 2024, it will only be distributing fifty print copies of the Code of Federal Regulations to depository libraries

nationwide. In response to this change, the state law library applied and was accepted to become a Preservation Steward for several titles (Statutes at Large, U.S. Code, U.S. Reports, and Code of Federal Regulations). Preservation Stewards make a commitment to retain, preserve, and provide access to specific print resources. The Alaska State Court Law Library is the only location in Alaska that will preserve these titles and the only one receiving the Code of Federal Regulations in print in the future.

As more resources are published in electronic format, legal research is increasingly conducted online. Older books and other non-digitized materials, however, continue to be available to library patrons. Members of the Alaska Bar Association and court personnel can borrow these materials, and the general public can use them on-site at the three staffed library locations.

Professional library staff at the three main branches provide research assistance in person and by email or phone, with a toll-free line available.

eFiling

By the end of FY 2024, all Alaska courts across the state were using electronic filing for criminal and minor offense cases. In addition, by March 2025, all courts, except Anchorage and Palmer, will be using electronic filing for general civil and small claims cases, including domestic relations, protective orders, and debt collection cases. The transition for the Anchorage and Palmer courts will take place later in 2025.

Electronic filing improves case processing time and reduces the amount of paper involved in case management, with resulting savings in paper, duplication, and postage costs. It also makes it possible for staff to work online to provide coverage to other court locations during staff shortages or other disruptions.

Looking Forward

The court system plans for all types of cases to be using electronic filing by mid-2026.

Electronic filing utilizes TrueFiling, a web-based platform, to submit documents to the court. Once the court made the transition to electronic filing for criminal and minor offense cases, the electronic record became the official case file.

Currently, for general civil and small claims cases, all court sites, except Anchorage and Palmer, have implemented eFile Lite. With eFile Lite,



Caribou moss (lichen), Marion Creek Campground, Dalton Highway (Second Judicial District)

parties file electronically through TrueFiling; the documents are printed and added to the case file. The paper file remains the official case file. After the court makes the transition to electronic filing for these case types, the electronic record will become the official case file.

The final case types to convert to electronic filing will be those defined by statute or court rule as confidential case types — CINA, juvenile delinquency, probate, guardianship, and mental commitment cases. It is anticipated that these cases will transition to electronic files by 2026.

Although electronic filing is mandatory for attorneys and self-represented litigants, self-represented litigants can seek an exemption to this requirement if they do not have internet access or the equipment necessary to file. The court system will offer education in the use of electronic filing for those representing themselves through its Access to Justice division. Also, court locations will have computers and scanners at the courthouse for electronic filing.

Early Resolution Program

Since its inception in 2009, the Alaska Court System’s Early Resolution Program (ERP) has received national attention for its innovative approach in resolving divorce, dissolution, and custody cases. Through mediation and negotiation, the ERP generally results in faster resolution, less expense, and less stress in these cases than with the traditional adversarial model. In FY24, the American Bar Association’s *Dispute Resolution Magazine* featured an article discussing the program in its September 2023 issue — “One and Done.”

Each week, ERP attorneys screen every new divorce and custody case in which neither party has an attorney. Most cases are accepted to the program; parties in the program are offered either mediation, help from volunteer lawyers, or a judicial settlement conference. They are scheduled for a hearing to be held usually within four to six weeks. If the parties reach an agreement, the judge puts the parties’ agreement on the record at the ERP hearing, distributes all the court paperwork, and closes the case. This

gives parties in ERP the opportunity to complete their case in a shorter period of time, and with fewer steps, than with the usual court case route. Since the program began, over eighty percent of cases heard in ERP have resulted in a settlement agreement.

In FY24 ERP expanded to cover domestic relations cases in all four judicial districts. Cases are batched by location. First District cases are usually held in Juneau, although in 2024, there were also two First District ERP hearings in Ketchikan. Third District ERP hearings are held in Anchorage, Palmer, and Kenai. Second District cases are included in the Anchorage ERP hearings, and Fourth District ERP hearings are held in Fairbanks.

The Early Resolution Program is part of the court system’s Access to Justice division.



Galbraith Lake, Brooks Range (Second Judicial District)

Alaska Online Dispute Resolution

In early 2024, the court system launched an online dispute resolution platform — AK ODR. This program gives the community a tool for resolving legal disputes through negotiation and mediation.

Participation in AK ODR is voluntary. It is not necessary to open a formal court case before using the platform, but parties in an already-opened case can also use the platform in resolving their disputes.

Looking Forward

In 2025, the program should be available on mobile devices, further increasing availability and convenience to members of our community.

AK ODR is much less time-consuming and expensive than the traditional court process. This is particularly pertinent to Alaska, where many communities are far from a courthouse. With the platform, parties are free to choose whether to negotiate their dispute independently or use the assistance of a mediator. For either choice, AK ODR allows people to work asynchronously — that is, on their own schedule without leaving



Wild geraniums, Wrangell (First Judicial District)

home. People are able to exchange messages, evidence, and offers in a less formal format than in the usual court process. The system also provides information and templates that can serve as building blocks for individualized resolutions. If parties choose, they can also request a court order and a judge will review the agreement.

There is currently no charge to use the system. If parties request a court order, there is a minimal fee. At this time the program is open for small claims and debt collection disputes. The court system plans to expand use of the platform into other areas, such as family law and traffic matters. It may also include online synchronous trials for some matters. It is envisioned that within times allotted for information and response, parties could upload arguments and evidence to support their positions. The judge would ask questions and make a decision.

These online tools provide options for resolving disputes in ways that can be more convenient and less intimidating than in an ordinary courtroom.

Therapeutic Courts

The Anchorage Coordinated Resources Project, one of the state's therapeutic courts, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in FY 2024. The

Looking Forward

The therapeutic court program has received a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance to expand its work with offenders who may have been involved with domestic violence and are exhibiting substance abuse disorders.

court, which is also known as Mental Health Court, handles cases involving individuals who are charged with certain criminal offenses and are exhibiting mental disorders or mental health problems. It was one of

the first therapeutic courts in the country and has served as a model for similar courts in other states.

Alaska's therapeutic courts provide an alternative to the usual criminal case process for some offenders. Repeat criminal offenders often struggle with mental health problems or drug or alcohol addictions that contribute to their recidivism. These courts enable offenders to address these issues

as part of the adjudication process. While still holding the offender accountable, the therapeutic court framework de-emphasizes the usual adversarial nature of the criminal justice process by adopting a teamwork approach to aid the offender in recovery. The court structures an extended individualized plan for the offender as part of a plea agreement. Depending on the type of therapeutic court, completion of the plan usually requires a year or longer. A yearly recidivism review of the therapeutic courts looks at all participants who have exited a court in the past five years. The most recent review shows that only twenty-nine percent of all participants who exited a therapeutic court recidivated during this period of time. Those who actually graduated — that is, completed their individualized agreements — recidivated at an even lower percentage — eighteen percent.

Alaska now has fourteen therapeutic courts in six communities — Anchorage, Palmer, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, and Sitka. The courts assist different types of offenders. Three deal specifically with offenders with mental health disorders; two work with veterans; and two handle cases involving the Office of Children’s Services. Two of the courts — the Sitka Healing-to-Wellness Court and the Henu’ Community Wellness Court in Kenai — are joint state-tribal courts. The other courts handle offenders exhibiting substance abuse problems, including alcohol.

At the end of FY24 the courts had an overall utilization rate of seventy-three percent, with seven operating at or above eighty percent capacity. Moreover, both the Families with Infants and Toddlers Court (FIT) in Palmer and the Sitka joint-jurisdiction court expanded their capacity during FY 2024. The Veterans Court in Anchorage continued to operate consistently close to capacity levels throughout the fiscal year. The Veterans Court in Fairbanks, still operating as federally-funded pilot program, also was in demand. The Anchorage Child in Need of Aid (CINA) Court, which has now adopted national family court treatment standards, has also grown.

Because the individualized offender case plans focus on rehabilitation and recovery, the administration of the therapeutic courts works with treatment providers and social service agencies in the courts’ communities. In FY24, the therapeutic court administration began negotiating Memoranda of Agreement with residential treatment programs to accommodate offenders in need of this level of care.

The therapeutic court program is in the final phase of an external evaluation of the drug and DUI-focused courts. The evaluation is being conducted by the National Center for State Courts.

Children’s Issues

In FY24, the Department of Law, with the Office of Children’s Services, filed 1,841 Child in Need of Aid Cases (CINA) with the court system. This

Looking Forward

The court system plans to implement the approach of the Fairbanks Joint Permanency Project, requiring six-month reviews in CINA cases, in Anchorage in 2025.

represents a slight decrease from FY23. Of these, 1,212 were to decide whether a child should be adjudicated a Child in Need of Aid — that is, whether the state should assume custody to assure the

child’s safety and well-being. There were 621 filings to terminate parental rights. Over ninety percent of the total filings were in the Third District, the most populated region in Alaska (Tables 4.25 and 4.27 in *Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2024*: <http://www.courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>).

Court Improvement Program

The court system is continuing to participate in the federally-funded Court Improvement Program (CIP). This program focuses on improving the way the court handles CINA cases, with coordination between the court system and the other agencies and tribes involved with CINA cases.



Waterfall, Tracy Arm (First Judicial District)

These cases are often complicated and protracted, with many individuals involved and many hearings over the lifetime of the case. In addition to the children themselves, participants can include parents and other family members; guardians; tribal representatives; judicial officers; attorneys for the parents, children, state, and tribe; guardians ad litem for the children; caseworkers from the Office of Children’s Services; and mediators.

In FY24, CIP focused on providing training and education for those involved with CINA cases with several kinds of projects. In autumn 2023, the court offered virtual training seminars for attorneys and for judicial officers. These focused on

“reasonable and active efforts.” The statutory term is the standard required in child welfare cases to try to reunite a child and parents.



Sea anemones, Petersburg (First Judicial District)

At the annual Newer Judge Conference for judges appointed to the bench in the previous three years, experienced judges presented a broad introduction to handling CINA cases for their newly appointed colleagues. The conference participants were also able to visit institutions often involved in the care of children in CINA cases — the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, McLaughlin Youth Facility, and the North Star Hospital Treatment facility.

CIP also offered training in spring 2024 on best practices for judges on placement of youth in treatment facilities.

The court is continuing to develop bench cards and case checklists for judges and magistrate judges in CINA cases. In addition, CIP furthered the implementation of an online dashboard that makes scheduling and case data available to judges and magistrate judges statewide.

Through CIP, the court is also working with the Office of Children’s Services to improve data sharing relevant to the CINA case process.

In FY24, the court system also produced several short videos explaining the case process for families and friends of children in CINA cases and began a series of brief videos aimed particularly at older youth who will soon be leaving state custody.

The Fairbanks court has focused on a pilot program, the Joint Permanency Project. This effort has worked to ensure that CINA cases never go longer than six months without a hearing. It is believed that increased judicial oversight will reduce the time a child remains in foster care and provide better outcomes.

Since 2021, the Fairbanks court has also been participating in the Implementation Sites Project of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). Fairbanks was one of the first twelve sites selected across the country; more have since joined the project. As a selected site, the Fairbanks court receives technical assistance and tailored support from the NCJFCJ. It draws upon the best practices presented in NCJFCJ’s *Enhanced Resource Guidelines* (<https://www.ncjfcj.org/publications/enhanced-resource-guidelines/>) and *Key Principles of*

Permanency Planning for Children (<https://www.ncjfcj.org/publications/key-principles-for-permanency-planning-for-children/>).

Since a large percentage of children in foster care throughout the state are Alaska Native, the court works closely with tribes and other Native groups, to address issues arising under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). In particular, state court judges regularly sit on training panels offered by the Alaska Native Justice Center on ICWA.

The court system is also working with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes in Alaska in the development of an ICWA court that will specifically handle CINA cases with Alaska Native children who are covered by ICWA.

In addition, the court is assisting the Alaska Federation of Natives with data in their work under the Tribal-State ICWA Partnership Grant.

Adult Guardianships and Conservatorships

In FY24, there were 1096 filings for appointment of guardians or conservators for adults in Alaska courts.

Under Alaska state law, the court may appoint a guardian or conservator when an individual lacks the capacity to make decisions in certain areas.

Looking Forward

The court system anticipates broadening its compilation of data on guardianships and conservatorships with future research.

A guardian usually has the authority to make decisions in such matters as housing, medical care, financial matters, and legal issues, while a conservator handles only financial affairs. If a guardian or conservator

is appointed, the case remains under court monitoring until the protected person regains capacity or dies. At the end of FY24, there were 4980 open adult guardianship or conservatorship cases.

Since the need for a guardian or conservator is often a function of aging and ill health, the number of these cases is expected to continue to grow as the state population ages overall. According to figures from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the population of Alaskans aged 65 or older grew by over 70 percent between July 2013 and

July 2023 (beginning of the 2024 fiscal year). Over the same period, the overall state population dropped slightly.*

The court is continuing to refine its monitoring of these cases. Guardians and conservators submit annual reports for court review. Effective review of these reports ensures the continued safety and well-being of the protected individuals. Court monitors provide an initial layer of review and elevate those reports that arouse concerns to the attention of the judge. These monitors also work directly with guardians and conservators to provide guidance in completing the required annual reports. In FY24, the court received funding for three additional monitors. This increase in monitoring positions will also extend the scope of the self-help phone line. Guardians and the public can use this line for questions about the process, required filings, and forms.



Moose calves, Fortymile Wild and Scenic River (Fourth Judicial District)

The court also appoints a court visitor for each guardianship case. (The court assumed oversight responsibility for the work of the court visitors in 2022 after a statutory change. They were previously under the Office of Public Advocacy.) After an initial assessment report with each new case, the visitor reports every three years on the protected person’s medical, housing, financial, educational, and employment situation as well as on family relationships.

The court is also focusing on providing more education for the general public on the responsibilities of adult guardians and conservators. It offers live classes via Zoom and a three-part online course for those seeking appointment as a guardian or conservator. The course is also being translated into Spanish, Tagalog, and Korean.

The FY24 Magistrate Judge Conference featured a session on guardianship cases, and all judicial officers have access to online training in this area. The court system is also developing bench cards for immediate reference in handling guardianship cases. In the future, electronic filing will also become the operational norm in these cases.

* Population growth was reported incorrectly in the print version of the Alaska Court System Annual Report FY 2023. The figures have been corrected in the online version.

Competency, Commitments, and Mental Health Issues

The court system continues to address the highly complex problems presented for the administration of justice by individuals experiencing mental and behavioral health problems.

Competency Cases

Individuals charged with crimes have a due process right to understand their court proceedings and to participate in their own defense. The court must order a competency evaluation when an individual's ability

Looking Forward

The court system is establishing a statewide behavioral health task force to study the interaction between current judicial and mental health systems. The task force will propose measures to better respond to the needs of individuals with mental and behavioral health problems who are involved with the court.

to comprehend proceedings or ability to participate in the defense is questionable. Such an evaluation must be conducted by a qualified psychiatrist or psychologist. The court considers the recommendation of the evaluator and other evidence in making a decision about an individual's ability to stand trial – that is, competency.

While awaiting a competency evaluation, a person may be in or out of custody, depending on the bail conditions set by the judge. Almost all competency hearings are conducted via videoconferencing.

In FY24, the court ordered 429 competency evaluations statewide, some of which involved the same individual. Almost three-quarters of this total were in the Third District.

In the Anchorage court, a centralization of the competency calendar under one Superior Court judge, which was implemented in 2019, has continued to reduce delays in handling these cases in their initial stages. In FY24, the Fairbanks court, in the Fourth Judicial District, adopted a similarly centralized calendar. This calendar is open to cases involving competency in the Second District as well. (The Mental Health Trust funds program managers for the two competency calendars.)

If deemed incompetent, a person cannot be tried, convicted, or sentenced while the incompetency remains; proceedings are therefore stayed. In felony cases, the court must commit the person to the Department



Dock in winter, Unalaska (Third Judicial District)

of Family and Community Services for competency restoration. In misdemeanor cases, a judge may also commit an individual for competency restoration but is not required to do so. Following an initial commitment period, the court may order a second ninety-day period; and in some cases the individual may be committed for a final six-month period for restoration.

If competency is restored, the criminal case proceeds. If the individual remains incompetent to stand trial, the charges are dismissed without prejudice. Continued commitment in such situations is then governed by civil law.

Only one facility in the state, the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), provides residential treatment for individuals committed for competency restoration. Only ten forensic beds are available for evaluation and restoration treatment. Since the need is continually greater than the number of beds available, individuals ordered for competency restoration must wait for a bed to become open, sometimes in pretrial detention.

To address this need, in FY24 API began a pilot outpatient program for competency restoration with a small number of individuals released on bail. API is also conducting jail-based competency restoration at the Anchorage Correctional Complex and Hiland Mountain.

The Omnibus Crime Bill (HB66), which goes into effect in 2025, contains changes in the competency process. Under the new legislation, for individuals who are charged with certain felony offenses and have been

found incompetent, the Department of Law must initiate civil commitment proceedings before their criminal cases are dismissed. The bill also specifically allows for the use of out-patient competency evaluation and restoration programs.

Involuntary Commitments

The court handled 2,561 involuntary civil commitment proceedings in FY24. Over ninety-nine percent of these cases involved mental health issues. (A very small number, less than one percent of this total, involved alcohol or drug-related commitments.)

Individuals with mental illness present complex problems for law enforcement and the courts. As with competency evaluations and restoration, the facilities available for court-ordered evaluation and treatment do not meet the need. API, the largest psychiatric facility in the state, has only sixty beds available for adult civil commitments and ten for adolescents.

In an attempt to address the problems posed by mental health crises, HB172, passed in 2022, provided for the establishment of crisis care centers, mobile mental health units, and crisis response lines, but these are still under development and have not yet affected the conduct of competency or civil commitment proceedings.

In addition, a multi-agency committee formed in 2022 has drafted new court rules on civil commitment procedures under Title 47.30. The Alaska Supreme Court is reviewing the proposed changes.



Oxbow lake near Goldstream Creek (Fourth Judicial District)

Meeting Language Needs

The court system received 1,216 separate requests in FY24 for assistance in languages other than English. It provided interpreters or translators in 43 different foreign languages and Alaska Native languages. In addition, it managed 231 requests for interpretation in American Sign Language (ASL). Requests for language assistance came from court sites in all four judicial districts, with two-thirds coming from the Anchorage and Palmer courts.

The most frequently requested foreign languages were Spanish, Samoan, Hmong, Tagalog, and Korean. Other commonly requested languages included Russian, Arabic, and Yup'ik.

Requests for interpretation or translation arose across a spectrum of case types — criminal, civil, probate, CINA — as well as in jury and customer service situations. The court system used telephonic language lines for most requests (1,053) and video remote assistance in others (121). On-site interpretation occurred with 19 requests, and 23 requests involved translation of written materials.

ASL interpreters worked either on-site or by video remote. There has also been an increased employment of out-of-state Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), who work alongside the ASL interpreters by video remote. CDIs are members of the deaf community who are fluent in ASL. Their own cultural and personal experience helps to bridge communication gaps that may arise between the hearing ASL interpreter and the person who is deaf. At some of the larger court sites, tablets that permit on-demand ASL interpretation are now also available.

In addition to the interpretation work, the court is continuing to translate court forms and various educational materials into commonly needed languages. Information and forms related to domestic violence protective orders are now available in multiple languages. The court is also translating the online course required for adult guardians and conservators into several languages.

In FY24, the court also produced an ASL overlay for a video on domestic violence protective orders.

Administrative Rule 6 covers the scope of Alaska Court System interpreter and translation services.

Tribes and Tribal Courts

In FY24, the Alaska Supreme Court adopted Civil Rule 5.4, establishing procedures for registering certain tribal court orders with the state court system under the comity doctrine. (The term *comity* refers to the practice of the courts in one jurisdiction recognizing the laws and decisions of the courts in another jurisdiction.) Rule 5.4 applies to tribal court orders from federally recognized tribes in divorce, dissolution, custody, paternity, minor name change, and adult name change cases.

The adoption of the new rule was only one aspect of the continued expansion in collaboration between the state court system and tribal courts. Other efforts included work on CINA case issues and joint-jurisdiction courts as well as increased interaction with Native organizations on court-related issues.

A major point of intersection between state and tribal courts involves the welfare of Native children. Under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) the state must notify the tribe when a child in a Child in Need of Aid (CINA) case is a member of a federally recognized tribe or is eligible for membership. A tribal representative can participate in the case, or the tribe can petition to take jurisdiction in the case. Tribes participated in 370 cases disposed between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. In 105 cases, tribes took jurisdiction.

In addition, two new state court rules establishing procedures for tribes in CINA cases went into effect in FY24. One rule establishes uniform procedures throughout the state for transfer of jurisdiction in CINA cases, specifying that the request to transfer can be made orally or in writing. The other rule allows the court to accept an oral or written notice of intervention on the record. The request to intervene need not be a formal motion.

In another area of state collaboration with tribes, the federally funded Court Improvement Program (CIP) regularly conducts training on provisions of ICWA for judges and CINA case stakeholders. In addition, state court judges and representatives sit on panel presentations on ICWA conducted by the Alaska Native Justice Center for tribal representatives.



Bull moose, Anchor River (Third Judicial District)



Hooper Bay (Fourth Judicial District)

Two of the state’s therapeutic courts focusing on offenders with chronic drug or alcohol problems are joint state-tribal jurisdiction courts: the Henu’ Community Wellness Court with the Kenaitze tribe in Kenai and the Healing to Wellness Court with the Sitka Tribe. In these courts a state judge and a tribal judge preside together.

The state court system is also working with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes (CCTHITA) to develop a separate joint jurisdiction ICWA court to improve the handling of cases under ICWA. This court, which will operate in Southeast, will serve as a model for similar courts elsewhere in the state. The core group involved in the development of this court — the court system, the Office of Children’s Services, CCTHITA, and the Casey Family Groups — is working on a final model.

With judicial officers, the court system places an emphasis on education in cross-cultural issues. In FY 2024, judges and justices attending the annual fall judicial conference participated in sessions on indigenous awareness, Alaska Native peacemaking practices, and the court system’s involvement with restorative justice programs under Criminal Rule 11(i) and Delinquency Rule 23(f). At the magistrate judge conference in spring 2024, participants also focused on restorative justice programs as structured under these two court rules.

State court justices and judges also regularly are invited to address Native conferences across the state.

Professional Development

The court system makes continued professional development possible for its judicial officers and its other employees.

Judicial Officers

Judicial education in its different modes involves a year-round effort. In FY24, the court system offered judicial officers throughout the state a mix of in-person and web-based educational opportunities. There were three statewide multi-day conferences: the annual Fall Judicial Conference in October 2023; the Newer Judge Conference in January 2024; and the Magistrate Judge Conference in April 2024.

These annual conferences offer professional education on topics pertinent to judicial work, ethics, and legislative changes. They also provide participants an in-person opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge with their colleagues. There is usually at least one guest speaker invited from Outside, as well as Alaska experts, to address the conference on a topic related to judicial work.

The conferences rotate sessions on certain core topics always important in the work of justices and judges. At the FY24 Fall Judicial Conference, participants attended sessions on the role of judges in cases involving addictions and in domestic violence cases. One day of the conference was focused on enhancing judicial skills in cases with self-represented litigants and when working with challenging people, including sovereign citizens. Other sessions focused on indigenous awareness, Alaska Native peacemaking practices, the court's restorative justice program, and state and tribal court collaboration. The panels for many of these sessions

Looking Forward

[Under a recent court order, the court system is expanding its mentorship program for District and Superior Court judges. The program supports trial court judges' professional development early in their judicial careers.](#)

appointment to the bench, District and Superior Court judges attend the Newer Judge Conference. This conference focuses on topics particularly useful to judges in this early stage of their judicial careers. At the FY24 conference, panels addressed jury management, involuntary civil

included professionals in the fields from both Alaska and Outside.

Recent changes to the law were also discussed. Conference participants also received reports on court administrative functions.

For the first three years following

commitments, the judge as employer, working with interpreters, CINA cases, evidence, and judicial outreach. In addition, the newer judges participated in shadowing — observing their more experienced colleagues at work in the courtroom. They also had an opportunity to tour local institutions relevant to their judicial work: the Alaska Psychiatric Institute, McLaughlin Youth Center, the Anchorage Correctional Complex, and the Alaska State Crime Lab. Also offered was individualized training about the court system’s electronic filing and case management systems.

The Magistrate Judge Conference offered sessions on bail, evidence, working with challenging people, guardianship issues, restorative justice, and the intersection of the courts and behavioral health. Recent appellate court decisions were discussed. Like the newer judges, the magistrate judges also participated in field trips to local institutions relevant to their work.

In addition to the annual conferences, all new District and Superior Court judges and magistrate judges have opportunities for training through the National Judicial College (NJC). They typically attend training through the NJC during their first twelve months on the bench. Thereafter, trial court judges are eligible to attend Outside training on a schedule. A recently developed court policy allows magistrate judges to attend Outside training on a regular schedule as well. Judicial officers also participate in grant-funded national trainings for therapeutic courts and child welfare cases.

Also in FY24, judicial officers received opportunities for web-based training in conducting settlement conferences and handling adult guardianship and conservatorship cases.

Trial Court Leadership and Staff

The court system also held a conference in Anchorage in April 2024 for clerks of court. Deputy magistrates, rural court administrators, and area court administrators also attended. Conference sessions addressed topics relevant to these employee groups, including electronic filing, digital evidence, and guardianships. Participants received updates on court administration and recent legislation affecting the courts. They also participated in role-playing designed to heighten their awareness of issues related to poverty and cultural differences.

In order to maintain a healthy work environment, the court system also continued throughout the year to address stress related to staff shortages, trials, and customer service. Multiple resources are available to employees

through the Trauma-Informed and Bias-Resistant Dashboard. In addition, employees receive ongoing training in security awareness and on civility in the workplace.

Court Administrators

In FY24, court administrators also received opportunities for training in diversified areas relevant to particular positions, through a mix of in-person and web-based programs.

Court Facilities

The court system has received capital funding for the architectural design, utility site work, and permitting in a major expansion of the Palmer courthouse. The Palmer court is one of the busiest in the state, with the

Looking Forward

The court system will request next phase construction funding for the Palmer courthouse expansion in the FY26 budget. It is also planning an extensive upgrade to the Anchorage Data Center in the Snowden Administration Building.

highest caseload per judge. It serves the entire Mat-Su Valley, where the population has grown over six percent since the 2020 census, according to figures from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The courthouse expansion will include

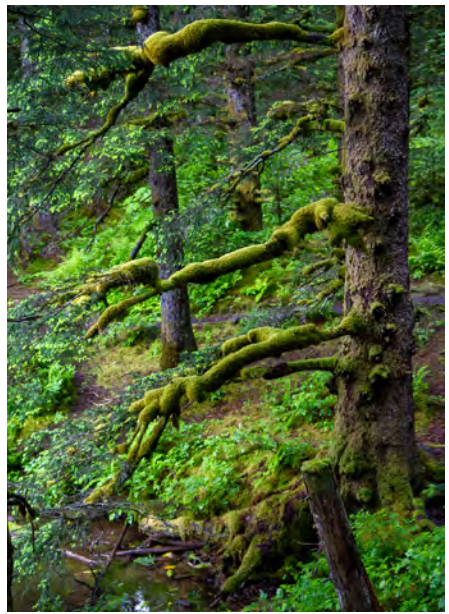
much needed additional courtrooms; more space for judges' chambers; expansion of the clerk's office space; and expansion of the security screening area.

Significant deferred maintenance at numerous buildings housing court facilities has necessitated temporary closures throughout the year, disrupting operations. The problems include leaking roofs and aging heating and air systems. During those closures, emergency proceedings and customer service are handled remotely, with non-emergency proceedings rescheduled.

The Alaska Court System oversees the operation of buildings at over forty court sites across the state, including routine and deferred maintenance, lease management, and security. At many of these sites, the court also handles grounds and parking lots, snow removal, and landscaping. The court itself owns eight buildings: the Nesbett Courthouse, the Snowden Administrative Building and three smaller buildings in Anchorage; the Rabinowitz Courthouse in Fairbanks; and the Kenai and Palmer courthouses. It utilizes space in other state government-owned buildings

at twelve sites and leases facilities from municipal governments, Native organizations, and private landlords at twenty-three locations.

In Bethel, planning continues for the acquisition of a justice center building following the completion of a conceptual design. The justice center would house court system facilities as well as several executive branch offices and possibly a tribal court, making it easier for the public to access state government service and tribal services at one location. The court system is working with the executive branch to identify funding possibilities. The Bethel Native Corporation, which is very interested in advancing the project, owns a possible building occupied currently by the Lower Kuskokwim School District administration.

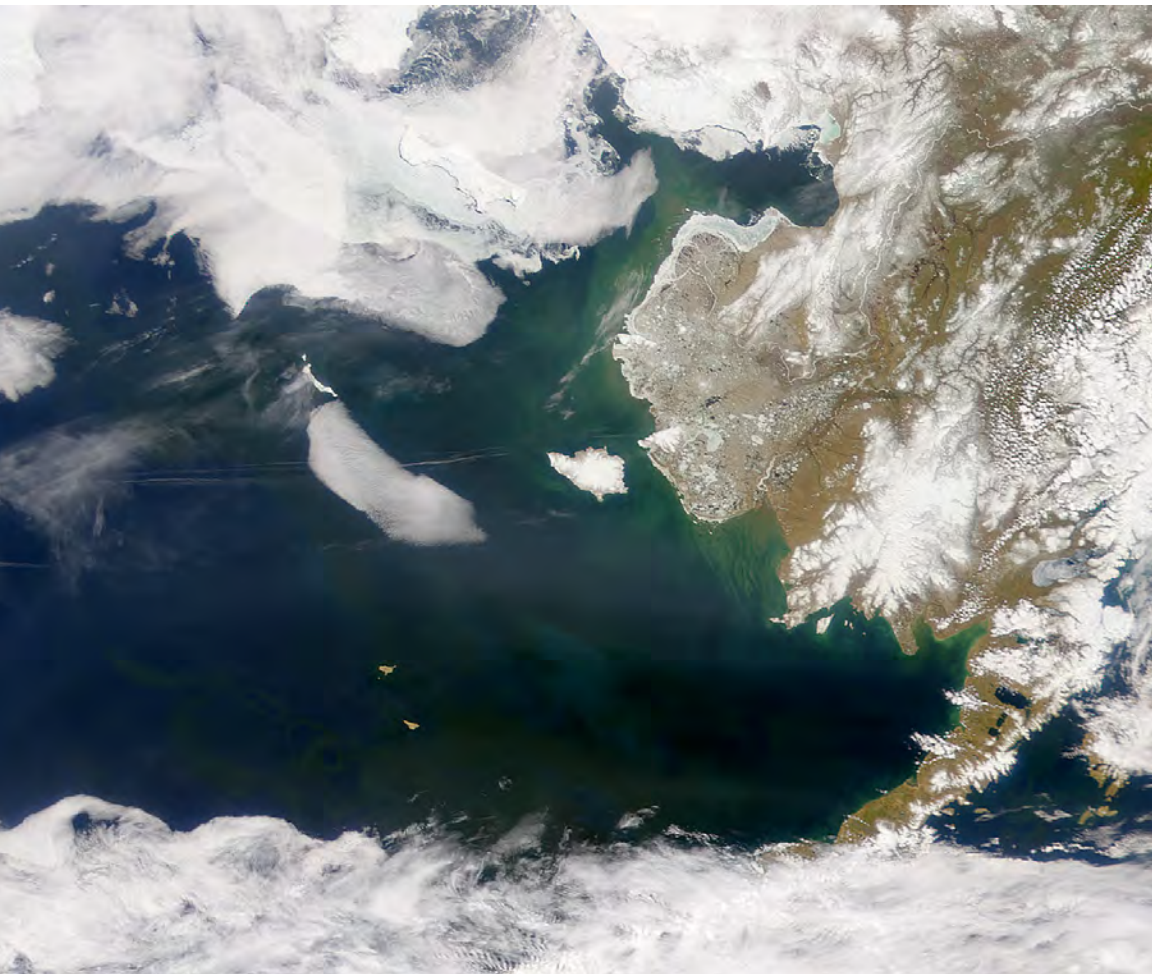


Rainforest mosses, Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park, Kodiak Island (Third Judicial District)

Other FY24 facilities work included the installation of security cameras at rural court sites and the completion of the upgrade of the heating and cooling system in the Snowden Administrative Building. The Kotzebue courthouse is undergoing a remodel of the clerk's counter and the judge's bench as well as the installation of a secure elevator.

Courtroom of the Future

The court system is modernizing and advancing the technology of courtrooms throughout the state with a long-term project — Courtroom of the Future. The project, which will span five to seven years, will upgrade and standardize video and audio resources in all courtrooms. Currently, the project managers are conducting a statewide census of the existing courtroom equipment and networks prior to adding the new equipment. The Technology department will work closely with Facilities on the installation of the necessary courtroom modifications, additional power, networking, and audio and video hardware. Initially, they will be incorporating digital video for evidence presentation as part of the electronic evidence project. They will build onto that with digital audio and controls. The project will first focus on adapting one courtroom in a larger courthouse — the Nesbett in Anchorage — and one in a smaller — Seward — before moving forward with the rest of the courts.



Bering Sea, Pribilof Islands, and western Alaska from SeaWiFs Project (NASA GSFC/ORBITIMAGE), 15 May 2002



Justices, Judges, and Senior Court Administrators

Ice floes in Cook Inlet (Third Judicial District)

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

Justices — Alaska Supreme Court

Peter J. Maassen (2012), Chief Justice
Susan M. Carney (2016)
Dario Borghesan (2020)
Jennifer S. Henderson (2021)
M. Jude Pate (2023)

Statewide Court Administration

Stacey Marz, Administrative Director
Mary Burnell, Deputy Director of Operations

Judges — Court of Appeals

Marjorie K. Allard (2012), Chief Judge
Tracey Wollenberg (2017)
Bethany Harbison (2018)
Timothy W. Terrell (2020)

Clerk of the Appellate Courts

Meredith Montgomery

First Judicial District

Amy G. Mead, Juneau (2018), Presiding Judge
Clayton Jones, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

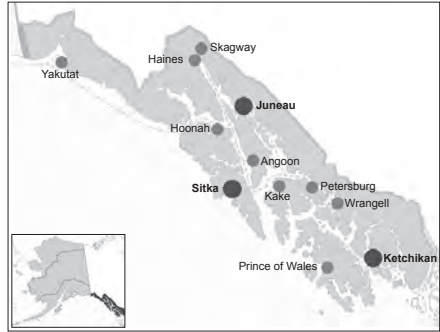
Amanda L. Browning, Sitka (2024)
Marianna Carpeneti, Juneau (2021)
Daniel E. Doty, Ketchikan (2022)
Katherine H. Lybrand (2022)
Daniel Schally, Juneau (2018) (resigned 2023)
Larry R. Woolford, Juneau (2024)

Judges — District Court

Kristian B. Pickrell, Ketchikan (2022)
Kirsten L. Swanson, Juneau (2016)

Magistrate Judges

Paul Korchin, Haines / Yakutat / Hoonah / Skagway (2022)



Peggy McCoy, Juneau (2023)
Rachel Newport, Petersburg / Wrangell (2020)
Kimberly Rice, Prince of Wales (2022)
Amanda Schulz, Ketchikan (2010)
Pamela Stahla-Kernin, Sitka / Angoon (2020)

Second Judicial District

Paul A. Roetman, Kotzebue (2010),
Presiding Judge
Robert Colvin Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Romano D. DiBenedetto, Nome (2017)
David Roghair, Utqiagvik (2021)

Magistrate Judges

Colleen Baxter, Kotzebue (2022)
Nicholas Defreitas, Utqiagvik (2023)
Heidi Ivanoff, Unalakleet (1998)
Aaron Michels, Kotzebue (2016–2023))
Pamela Smith, Nome (2019)



Third Judicial District

Thomas A. Matthews, Anchorage (2018),
Presiding Judge
Carol McAllen, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Rachel Ahrens, Valdez (2019)
John C. Cagle, Palmer (2019)
Dani Crosby, Anchorage (2015)
Catherine M. Easter, Anchorage (2012)
Una S. Gandbhir, Anchorage (2018)
Josie W. Garton, Anchorage (2018)
Jason Gist, Kenai (2018)
Andrew Guidi, Anchorage (2010)
Laura Hartz, Anchorage (2023)
Tom V. Jamgochian, Palmer (2024)
Lance E. Joanis, Kenai (2018)
Kari Kristiansen, Palmer (2006) (retired
2024)
Yvonne Lamoureux, Anchorage (2017)
Kelly J. Lawson, Kenai (2023)
Jack R. McKenna, Anchorage (2021)
William F. Morse (2002) (retired 2023)
David A. Nesbett, Anchorage (2023)



Andrew Peterson, Anchorage (2018)
Peter Ramgren, Anchorage (2019)
Christina Rankin, Anchorage (2023)
Christina Reigh, Dillingham (2017)
Kevin M. Saxby, Anchorage (2012)
Bride Seifert, Homer (2019)
Kristen C. Stohler, Palmer (2019)
Herman G. Walker, Anchorage (2015)
Stephen B. Wallace, Kodiak (2019)
Ian Wheelles, Anchorage (2022)
Jonathan A. Woodman, Palmer (2016)
Adolf Zeman, Anchorage (2020)

Judges — District Court

Jo-Ann M. Chung, Anchorage (2011)
Brian K. Clark, Anchorage (2003)
Chris Darnall, Anchorage (2024)
Leslie Dickson, Anchorage (2012)
Martin C. Fallon, Kenai (2019)
Michael J. Franciosi, Anchorage (2017)
J. Patrick Hanley, Anchorage (2005)

Michael B. Logue, Anchorage (2018)
Kari L. McCrea, Anchorage (2017)
Shawn D. Traini, Palmer (2019)
David R. Wallace, Anchorage (2009)
Pamela S. Washington, Anchorage
(2010)

Magistrate Judges

Judson Adams, Glennallen / Valdez
(2018)
Kay Adams, Cordova (2008–2023)
Michael Aiello, Dillingham / Naknek /
Unalaska (2019)
Marika Athens, Anchorage (2021)
David Bauer, Anchorage (2011)
Sidney Billingslea, Anchorage (2013)
Katherine Chung, Anchorage (2021)
Monica Elkinton (2023)
Michelle Higuchi, Kenai (2021)
Loren Hildebrandt, Anchorage (2023)
Derek Koehler, Palmer (2023)
Elisia Kupris, Anchorage (2022)

Jennifer Manculich, Anchorage (2018)
Donna McCready, Anchorage (2013)
Heather O'Brien, Anchorage (2018)
Robert Polley, Anchorage (2017)
Michael Smith, Anchorage (2015)
Hannah Steketee, Palmer (2023)
Jonathan Stinson, Anchorage (2023)
Jenna Strohmeyer, Palmer (2023)
Kimberley Sweet, Kenai (2018)
Christina Teaford, Anchorage, Seward
(2008)
Coralette Waite (2023)
Dawson Williams, Kodiak (2007)

Fourth Judicial District

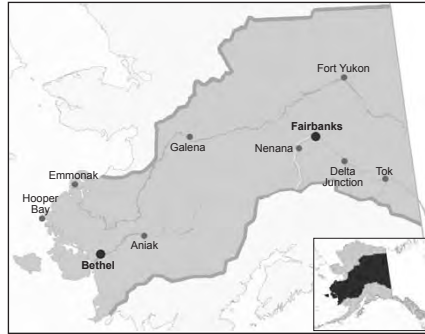
Brent E. Bennett, Fairbanks (2019),
Presiding Judge
Candice Duncan, Area Court
Administrator (2020–2024)
* Raúl Calvillo, Area Court Administrator

Judges — Superior Court

Terrence P. Haas, Bethel (2018)
(resigned 2023)
Patricia L. Haines, Fairbanks (2021)
Paul R. Lyle, Fairbanks (2008) (retired
2023)
William T. Montgomery, Bethel (2024)
Nathaniel Peters, Bethel (2017)
Earl A. Peterson, Fairbanks (2019)
Kirk Schwalm, Fairbanks (2022)
Thomas I. Temple, Fairbanks (2018)
Amy K. Welch, Fairbanks (2023)

Judges — District Court

Maria Bahr, Fairbanks (2021)
Matthew Christian, Fairbanks (2013)
Benjamin A. Seekins, Fairbanks (2012)



Magistrate Judges

* Natalie Alexie, Bethel (2023)
Raechyl Huisingsh, Nenana / Galena / Fort
Yukon (2023)
Darlene Johnson-Edwards, Emmonak
(2000)
Risa C. Leonard, Fairbanks (2021)
Jeffrey May, Nenana / Galena / Fort Yukon
(2018–2023)
Spenser J. Ruppert, Fairbanks (2021)
Bruce G. Ward, Bethel (2012–2023)
Yvette Young, Delta Junction / Tok (2018)

Active Pro Tem Judges

Eric A. Aarseth
Joel H. Bolger
William B. Carey
Robert L. Eastaugh
Dana A. Fabe
Natalie K. Finn
Gregory L. Heath
Michael A. MacDonald
David Mannheimer
Warren W. Matthews
Michael P. McConahy
Patrick J. McKay

Gregory A. Miller
Anna M. Moran
William F. Morse
Nancy J. Nolan
Philip M. Pallenberg
Eric B. Smith
Michael R. Spaan
Trevor N. Stephens
Nelson Traverso
Daniel E. Winfree
Michael L. Wolverton
Mark I. Wood

* Also served in another court position in FY24.

Deputy Magistrates, Clerks of Court, and Rural Court Administrators

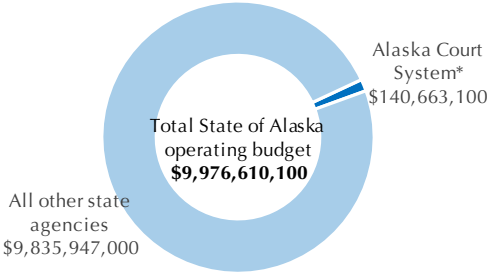
Susan Adams, Anchorage
Kiemberly Bates, Glennallen
Brielle Boswell, Valdez
Lauren Burnham, Tok
Debbie Carlson, Cordova
Denice Chappell, Third Judicial District
Barbara Cloud, Palmer
Anissa Coleman, Juneau
Suzanne Cowley, Kodiak
Brandi Davis, Ketchikan
Annalisa DeLozier, Fourth Judicial District
Jenna Durst, Petersburg
Rae Ann Filla, Delta Junction
Bridgit Gillis, Kenai
Angelica Go, Unalaska
Marla Grant, Nome
Evelyn Gregg, Utqiagvik
MacKenzie Houser, Prince of Wales (Craig)
Regina Johnson, Bethel
Ross Kinsey, Galena
James Kwon, Third Judicial District
Larry Lee, Juneau
Lori Marvin, Third Judicial District
Evelyn McClain, Naknek
Ruth Meier, Fairbanks
Iris Molnar, Kotzebue

Natalie Monroe, Palmer
Kimberly Moore, Emmonak
Stacey Nemanic, Ketchikan
Jenny Nicoli, Aniak
Tonya O'Connor, Dillingham
Jennifer Opie, Haines
Dawn Osenga, Seward
Cynthia Percey, Anchorage
Arlene Peter, Fort Yukon
Pamela Pitka, Galena
Katlyn Powell, Wrangell
Sheri Ridgeway, Wrangell
Linda Rios, Anchorage
Caitlin Rothbart, Juneau
Melissa Samuels, Second Judicial District
Ruth Sensenig, Homer
Zachary Singleton-Havner, Utqiagvik
Amy Jo Sparrowgrove, Sitka
Derek Sullivan, Fourth Judicial District
Tessa Tate, Fairbanks
Samantha Thompson, Nenana
Sarah Tipikin, Homer
Kristie Vienna, Kenai
Jolene Watkins, Angoon
Niccole Williams, Hoonah
Lori Wilson, Third Judicial District

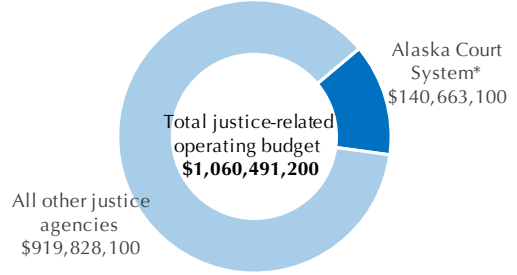
Court Statistical Highlights

Alaska Court System Budget

State of Alaska Operating Budget, FY24



Justice-Related Operating Budget, FY24



* Alaska Court System budget figure includes Alaska Judicial Council and Alaska Commission on Judicial Conduct.

Filings and Dispositions by Case Type, FY24

Alaska Supreme Court	Filings	Dispositions
Civil appeals	209	180
Petitions for hearing	80	87
Petitions for review	54	55
Bar / original applications	18	12
Total	361	334

Alaska Court of Appeals	Filings	Dispositions
Merit appeals	160	142
Sentence appeals	26	18
Petiitions	35	36
Bail appeals / original applications	14	16
Total	235	212



Further FY 2024 Alaska Court System data are available at:

Alaska Court System Statistical Report FY 2024

<https://courts.alaska.gov/admin/index.htm#annualrep>

The online document includes data on case filings and dispositions for both trial and appellate courts for all case types for FY24, as well as comparative figures for previous fiscal years. It also includes summary analyses of the figures from both trial and appellate courts.

Superior Court	Filings	Dispositions
Felony	6,071	7,113
CINA	1,841	1,991
Delinquency	663	629
Domestic relations	3,516	3,286
General civil	2,366	2,288
Probate	6,180	6,589
Total	20,637	21,896

District Court	Filings	Dispositions
Misdemeanor	16,075	18,106
Minor offense	38,036	37,608
Small claims	3,777	4,024
Civil protective order	7,889	7,731
General civil	6,305	5,144
Total	72,082	72,613



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Reindeer herd, St. Paul Island (Third Judicial District)

Cover photograph: Sea stacks in Spire Cove, Kenai Fjords National Park (Third Judicial District), 24 Jul 2024. Photo by Alex Ennes, National Park Service (alaskanps on Flickr; public domain).

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Short-eared owl, Juneau (First Judicial District)



Sunrise on the Chugach Mountains (Third Judicial District)



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