



# Press Release

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## Alaska Court System Selects Next Chief Justice

**Anchorage, AK, November 29, 2022** - The members of the Alaska Supreme Court have selected Justice Peter J. Maassen to serve as Chief Justice commencing February 7, 2023. Justice Maassen, who was appointed to the Supreme Court in 2012, follows Chief Justice Daniel E. Winfree, whose term as Chief Justice expires upon his retirement on February 6, 2023.

Under Alaska's Constitution, the Chief Justice is selected from among the justices of the Supreme Court by majority vote of the justices. The Chief Justice serves as the administrative head of the judicial branch of government, presides over Supreme Court arguments and conferences, appoints presiding judges for Alaska's four judicial districts, and serves as the chair of the Alaska Judicial Council. A justice may serve more than one term as Chief Justice but not consecutively.

Justice Maassen was born and raised in west Michigan, the son of a minister and an elementary school teacher. He attended Hope College, Wayne State University Law School, and the University of Michigan Law School, where he received his J.D. in 1980. He and his wife, Kay Gouwens, first came to Alaska in 1980 and came to stay in 1981. Other than a two-year stint in Washington, D.C. -- where he worked in the General Counsel's Office of the U.S. Department of Commerce and for a law firm with a federal administrative practice -- Justice Maassen spent most of his legal career in private practice in Anchorage. His civil litigation work was varied and included many appeals. From 1994-2000 he served as editor-in-chief of the Alaska Bar Rag, the official publication of the Alaska Bar Association. In 2006 he received the Professionalism Award from the Alaska Bar Association's Board of Governors. He was a member of the Board of Governors from 2009-2012, serving as treasurer, president-elect, and discipline liaison. He also served for ten years on the board of the Anchorage Youth Court, an alternative, peer-driven justice system for young offenders. He is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation. He was a long-time member of the Supreme Court's Civil Pattern Jury Instruction Committee, and since joining the court he has chaired a number of other committees considering issues such as access to justice, judicial education, and court security. He and Kay have a grown daughter who also lives in Alaska.

**About the Alaska Court System:** The mission of the [Alaska Court System](https://www.akcourts.gov/) is to provide an accessible and impartial forum for the just resolution of all cases that come before it, and to decide such cases in accordance with the law, expeditiously and with integrity.