



Judicial Selection in Wyoming

How Judges and Justices Are Chosen

When a judicial vacancy is announced, the **Judicial Nominating Commission** interviews qualified Wyoming attorneys who have expressed interest in serving as a judge or justice.

What makes up the Commission?

- Three non-attorneys selected by the Governor;
- Three attorneys selected by the Wyoming State Bar; and
- The Chief Justice (non-voting member unless there is a tie).

The Judicial Nominating Process

When there is a judicial vacancy:

- The Judicial Nominating Commission announces the opening;
- The Judicial Nominating Commission reviews expressions of interest, interviews candidates, and picks the three most qualified; and
- The Governor appoints one to fill the vacancy.

New judges and justices are appointed to serve the citizens of Wyoming within 90 days. Election and Senate confirmation take much longer and inject politics into the process of selecting independent judges and justices.

Judicial Independence Matters

Judges and justices need to be fair and make decisions based on the law - not politics or public pressure. In Wyoming, judges and justices are chosen and reviewed in ways that value **independence** and **accountability**.

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For more information, please visit the Wyoming Judicial Branch's website: www.wyocourts.gov

Judicial Accountability

Retention/Impeachment

Wyoming judges and justices do not run in regular elections. Instead, Wyoming voters decide if they should stay in their jobs through **retention elections**.

- Voters answer “yes” or “no” to keep the judge or justice.
- Judges and justices serve different terms:
 - Supreme Court: 8 years
 - District Court: 6 years
 - Chancery Court: 6 years
 - Circuit Court: 4 years
- The Legislature can remove Wyoming judges and justices, but only for serious misconduct.

Appeals

If a party believes a judge made a mistake, they can ask a **higher court to review** the decision.

Public Hearings

Most court cases are **open to the public** (some cases are confidential pursuant to statute), so everyone can see how judges and justices make decisions.

Code of Ethics

Wyoming judges and justices follow strict ethical rules referred to as the **Wyoming Code of Judicial Conduct**. Complaints about judges and justices are handled by the **Commission on Judicial Conduct and Ethics**. This group can recommend actions like retirement or removal if a judge or justice breaks the rules.

Judicial Selection Criteria

Qualifications

To be a judge or justice in Wyoming, you must:

- Live in Wyoming for several years.
- Be authorized to practice law in Wyoming.
- Be experienced in the practice of law.
- Be under the age of 70 (Supreme Court and District Court).

Good candidates are:

- Local attorneys who understand community values.
- Guided by the rule of law, not public opinion.
- Professionally competent.
- Individuals with integrity.
- Impartial and fair.
- Individuals with a patient and dignified temperament.