



Secretary of State

Kim Wyman

Judicial Elections

Clearinghouse Elections Notice

Issue #15-02

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All judicial elections are conducted as nonpartisan elections under the Top 2 Primary laws. However, there are exceptions that apply to several judicial offices. This updated Clearinghouse (with chart) replaces Issue #13-01.

Candidate Qualifications

Judicial candidates must be registered voters in the jurisdiction of the office when filing a declaration of candidacy. (RCW 29A.24.075)

Exceptions:

- A candidate for superior court judge needs to be a registered voter in Washington State. The candidate is not required to be a resident in the county of that court. (Art. IV, Sec. 17, State Constitution)
- A candidate for municipal court judge must be a registered voter within the county. However, the candidate is not required to be a resident in the city of that court. (RCW 3.50.055)

Printed on the Ballot

Most judicial elections are scheduled for even-numbered years and treated the same as other nonpartisan offices. (RCW 29A.52.220)

Exceptions:

- An uncontested superior court race in a county with a population of 100,000 or more is not printed on the ballot. Instead, the filing officer issues a certificate of election following the last day for candidates to withdraw. This applies only

when the office has a single candidate and **each** county within the jurisdiction exceeds the 100,000 population threshold. (Article IV Section 29 of the Washington State Constitution)

- Elections to fill vacancies for judicial offices (other than district and municipal courts) may occur in odd or even-numbered years.
- Elections to fill vacancies for district court positions occur in even-numbered years only. (AGLO 1973 No. 76)
- An **elected** municipal court office is on the ballot in odd-numbered years only. A vacancy is filled by appointment for the remainder of the term. (RCW 3.50.050, RCW 3.50.093)

Judicial Chart

The chart attached to this Clearinghouse, *Judicial Elections in Washington State*, explains the framework for judicial elections.

For more information, please [contact](#) the Certification & Training Program of the Office of the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

Judicial Elections in Washington State

Candidate s	Municipal Court District Court Court of Appeals Supreme Court		Superior Court	
	Primary	General	Primary	General
1	No ¹	Yes ²	County population less than 100,000: No ¹ County population 100,000 or more: No because certificate of election is issued after candidate filing ³	County population less than 100,000: Yes ² County population 100,000 or more: No because certificate of election was issued after candidate filing ³
2	No ¹	Yes ²	No ¹	Yes ²
3 or more	Yes	Yes ²	Yes	Yes ²

¹ [RCW 29A.52.220](#)

² [RCW 29A.36.170](#)

³ [Article IV, Section 29 Note: When applied to multi-county jurisdictions, all counties in the jurisdiction must meet the population threshold.](#)

An election to fill a vacancy in District Court may not occur in an odd-numbered year, per [AGLO 1973 No. 76](#) and [RCW 29A.04.321\(1\)](#).