



# Judicial Recruitment and Excellence

*Promoting effective, innovative services through the recruitment and education of judges*

## JUDICIAL RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

The recruitment and retention of highly-qualified judges is essential to the Court's constitutional charge to provide, timely, fair, and impartial justice. Selecting the most qualified applicants for the bench starts with having an adequate number of highly-qualified applicants. The Idaho Courts have experienced recruitment challenges for all levels of judgeships; district judge recruitment has been particularly difficult. Judicial Recruitment in FY2015:

Judgeship Type	Number of Vacancies	Total Applications	Average Applications
Court of Appeals	1	12	12
District Judge	3	27	9
Magistrate Judge	4	57	14

One of the challenges the Idaho Courts face is the ability to recruit highly-qualified applicants from the private sector into a new career path who are otherwise already in their mid-to-late working careers and well established in their positions. The struggle is to provide adequate compensation for a highly qualified attorney to consider leaving a thriving career for a district judgeship where they could face a contested election every four years.

The courts also struggle to find ways to encourage more magistrate judges to apply for district and appellate court positions. Because of their experience in handling court proceedings and knowledge of the law, magistrate judges are highly desirable for district judgeships. Additionally, broad district judge recruitment challenges persist. Magistrate judge vacancies in the same time-frame and in the same county as district judge vacancies consistently garner more applications:

Fiscal Year & County	District Judge Applications	Magistrate Judge Applications
FY14 Nez Perce	4	14
FY14 Ada	11 and 14 (two vacancies)	26 (three positions) and 11
FY15 Kootenai	10	17 and 19 (two vacancies)

## LEGISLATURE TAKES ACTION

The 2014 Legislature increased judicial salaries, with the largest increases for district judges, where the recruitment challenges have been the greatest. The increase in salaries assisted recruitment efforts by providing more competitive salaries and increasing the salary differential between magistrate, district, and appellate judges. In FY15, the average number of applicants per district judge position increased from 8 applicants per position to 9 applicants per position. We will continue to monitor our recruitment activities to enhance recruitment. The FY15 Legislature maintained the judicial salary levels approved in 2014.

Current Office	FY2014	FY2015
Chief Justice	\$123,400	\$137,000
Justices	\$121,900	\$135,000
Court of Appeals Chief Judge	\$120,900	\$132,000
Court of Appeals Judges	\$120,900	\$130,000
Administrative District Judges	\$115,800	\$126,000
District Judges	\$114,300	\$124,000
Magistrate Judges	\$109,300	\$112,000

Report to the Governor  
C.L. "Butch" Otter  
and the  
2nd Regular Session of the  
63rd Idaho Legislature



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## NATIONAL JUDICIAL SALARY RANKINGS

The Idaho Judiciary participates in national salary surveys annually in conjunction with the National Center for State Courts. As of January 2015, Idaho district judge salaries were ranked 44th in the nation and the Supreme Court salaries were ranked 46th, down from 43rd and 45th in 2014. The national rankings are an indicator of our ability to be competitive in recruiting highly qualified applicants.

## IDAHO COURTS EXPAND OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Idaho Courts have expanded outreach efforts to include workshops for district judge applicants. In FY15, 25 potential applicants for district judgeships attended recruitment workshops designed to provide information; not only about serving as a district judgeship is a rewarding career choice, judicial compensation, and benefits; but also about the realities of serving on the bench.

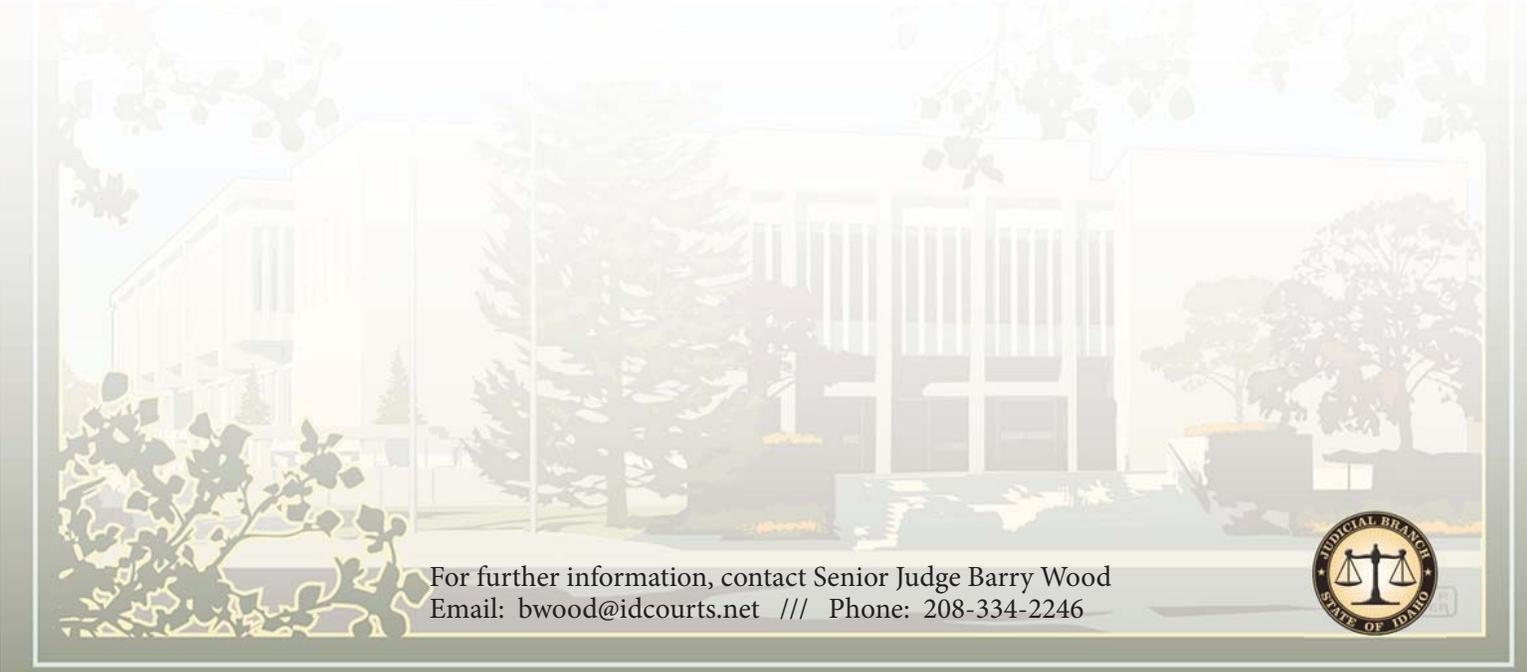
The selection process applicants participate in to become a district judge has also been a deterrent to potential applicants. The Judicial Recruitment Committee, comprised of appellate judges, district court staff, administrative court staff, and public and private sector attorneys, is currently developing a survey tool to gather feedback about the selection process and identify areas for improvement.

The Idaho Courts will continue to expand outreach efforts to reach more potential applicants.

## STRENGTHENING IDAHO'S JUDICIARY

In FY14 the Court and the Judicial Council jointly received a grant to strengthen Idaho's current judicial performance evaluation program. The grant secured the assistance of national experts in reviewing Idaho's current performance evaluation survey and in developing a new survey. The experts also convened focus groups to gain the input of Idaho judges, attorneys, and court staff regarding these evaluations. The Idaho Judiciary remains committed to providing a judicial evaluation program and committed to 100% participation in these evaluations, which are directed at self-improvement. Judicial evaluations are one aspect of the Judicial Excellence and Education Program to ensure excellence throughout a judge's service. The program will begin with the recruitment of highly qualified judges and continue through pre-bench orientation, new judge mentoring and education, periodic surveys and access to resources to improve performance, ongoing education, and extending to retirement and subsequent senior judge service.

One unique aspect of the new judicial excellence surveys is that a facilitator judge will review the evaluation survey results and then observe the judge being evaluated in the courtroom prior to discussing the feedback and offering resources for professional development as appropriate to the judge being evaluated. The trained facilitator judges will be both sitting and senior judges.



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