

- Diversity

Every qualified judicial applicant has an equal opportunity to be selected - unlike popular election, which rewards those who raise large sums of money from supporters with special interests or expectations. Merit selection of judges makes it possible to create a judicial system reflective of the community - rich with ethnic, gender and geographic diversity.

- Equal Access to Justice

All individuals appearing in Maricopa County Superior Court are guaranteed the right to resolve their legal disputes in a court that makes decisions based solely on the law. Courts are accountable to the law and constitution. Individuals who feel decisions in their cases are unjust, have the opportunity to appeal court rulings.

- Accountability to the Public

Judges appointed by the merit selection process are placed on general election ballots every four years for the public to determine if they shall be "retained" in office. Jurors, litigants, witnesses, lawyers coming to judges' courtrooms and court staff are asked to fill in surveys that evaluate a variety of performance issues. Information from those surveys are part of the Judicial Performance Review (JPR) and are used to educate voters and the public about judges on the retention ballot.

Want to Learn More?

Judicial biographies, contact information, court case histories, court rulings and other helpful information is available at the court's web site:
www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov

Additional information about Merit Selection and Judicial Performance Review is available on the Arizona Supreme Court web site:
www.supreme.state.az.us

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MERIT SELECTION OF JUDGES



Superior Court
of Arizona
Maricopa County

Merit Selection of Judges in Maricopa County

“The dignity and stability of government in all its branches, the morals of the people and every blessing of society depend so much upon an upright and skillful administration of justice, that the judicial power ought to be distinct from both the legislative and executive and independent upon both, that so it may be a check upon both, as both should be checks upon that.”

Thomas Jefferson



Daily, judges of the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County make difficult decisions about guilt and innocence, punishment, shattered marriages and broken families. They help resolve legal issues involving mentally ill individuals who may pose a danger to themselves and others and incapacitated adults who cannot care for themselves. They resolve contract disputes and accusations of malpractice or other business misdeeds by accountants, builders, doctors, lawyers and others.

Their decisions are life-changing for everyone involved. This is why the public entrusts the court to protect their rights, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or economic status. The public deserves the most highly competent, ethical, scholarly and compassionate judges to serve them.

Members of the Maricopa County Superior Court bench reflect these ideals and are committed to providing timely, fair and impartial justice.

What distinguishes Maricopa County Superior Court judges from a vast number of trial judges around the country is that they do not run for office in partisan elections fueled by funds from political parties and influence brokers.

Instead, the men and women who become Maricopa County Superior Court judges are selected in a process called “merit selection.” Judges are chosen because of their professional qualifications, legal competency, high ethical standards and dedication to serve the public by upholding the law.

Merit selection of judges has been used in Maricopa County since 1974 as the result of a voter-approved constitutional change. More than three decades later, it is still the preferred method of judicial selection.



Benefits of merit selection:

- **Judges who are highly qualified.** Merit-selected judges are appointed by the governor. But the appointment is made after a politically-balanced, 16-member commission reviews applicants, evaluates their qualifications and

holds public interviews. Comments from the public are encouraged and considered in the selection process. For each judicial vacancy, the commission selects at least three nominees, whose names are sent to the governor for consideration and appointment. No more than 60% of the nominees can be from the same political party. The commission, appointed by the governor, is chaired by the Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice. The members include five lawyers and 10 non-lawyers from different geographic areas and diverse political parties.

- **Fair and Impartial Courts**

Merit-selected judges are free from political debts that supporters may expect to be paid. Judges are sworn to uphold the constitution and serve everyone in a fair and impartial manner.