



COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS

Justice Court Judge



Summary of Office

Justice courts have jurisdiction over civil cases involving amounts of \$3,500 or less (small claims), traffic tickets that originate outside a municipality, and any misdemeanor criminal cases.

Number to Be Elected

The number of justice court judges for each county is determined by population within the county. Counties with populations of less than 35,000 have two justice court judges; populations between 35,000 and 70,000 have three justice court judges; populations between 70,000 and 150,000 have four; and counties with populations exceeding 150,000 have five.

Term of Office

Nominations for election to the office of the justice court judge are made via primary elections conducted by the political parties or via a petition of qualified electors. The general election for the office of the justice court judge is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of general election years. Unlike most other judges in the judicial system, justice court judge races are partisan. Justice court judges are elected from geographic districts and serve 4-year terms. The term of office of a justice court judge starts on the first Monday of January after the election.

Criteria to Run

Must be a qualified elector and a resident of the county 2 years preceding the day of election. Must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Must complete a training course within 6 months of the beginning of the term of office.

Duties of Office

Justice court judges have jurisdiction over all civil actions for the recovery of debts or damages for personal property where the principle debt, amount of demand, or value of property to be recovered in court does not exceed \$3,500. Justice court judges have jurisdiction over criminal violations in the county in the same manner as the circuit court. However, criminal proceedings only occur in the justice court where the punishment does not extend beyond a fine and imprisonment in the county jail. No justice court judge may preside over a trial in any situation where there is personal interest. Justice court judges are required to hold regular terms of court at times subject to their discretion. Judges are required to hold at least one session of court per month, but not more than two, at a reasonable time in a courtroom established by the board of supervisors.

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