

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Pinal County Applicants Sought for Judicial Performance Review

Superior Court judges in Arizona are chosen in two ways. Counties with a population of less than 250,000 people elect Superior Court judges. Counties with a population of more than 250,000 people have Superior Court judges who are appointed through the state's merit selection process.

The 2010 Census certified that Pinal County now has a population of more than 250,000 people.

Pinal County judges will now participate in the merit selection process and stand for "retention elections," rather than competitive elections. Judges on the ballot will be reviewed by the Judicial Performance Review Commission, so that voters will know whether the judges on the ballot meet judicial performance standards.

The 2012 election will be the first time that information is available to Pinal County voters about the Superior Court judges on their ballot.

The judicial reviews are based on surveys of people who come to court and observe the judges' performance. Information collected at public hearings and judicial discipline records are also considered.

The Commission on Judicial Performance Review will include members from Pinal County beginning this fall. The Supreme Court will appoint three public members from Pinal County (who cannot be lawyers or judges) to the commission. The Court will also appoint one attorney from Pinal County to the commission.

Mike Hellon, a public member and chairman of the Commission on Judicial Performance Review, encourages Pinal County citizens to take an active role in judicial review: "A qualified and independent judiciary, untainted by partisan politics, is one of the cornerstones of our free society. Serving on the commission that reviews the performance of Arizona judges is an important and satisfying contribution to the quality and independence of our judicial system."

The Commission meets four to six times a year in Phoenix. Members are reimbursed for travel expenses. Service on this commission involves active participation by the member with a commitment to attend most if not all of the meetings.

Judicial Performance Review also includes a self-improvement component. In addition to the commission appointments, public members and attorneys are needed to serve on teams that will meet with Pinal County judges about their performance.

Applicants must be residents of Pinal County. An application form can be downloaded at: www.azcourts.gov/committeescommissions and should be submitted to the address on the form by August 12, 2011. The application can also be requested by sending an email to JPR@courts.az.gov or calling 602-452-3098. More information about Judicial Performance Review can be found at www.azjudges.info or by calling 602-452-3098.