



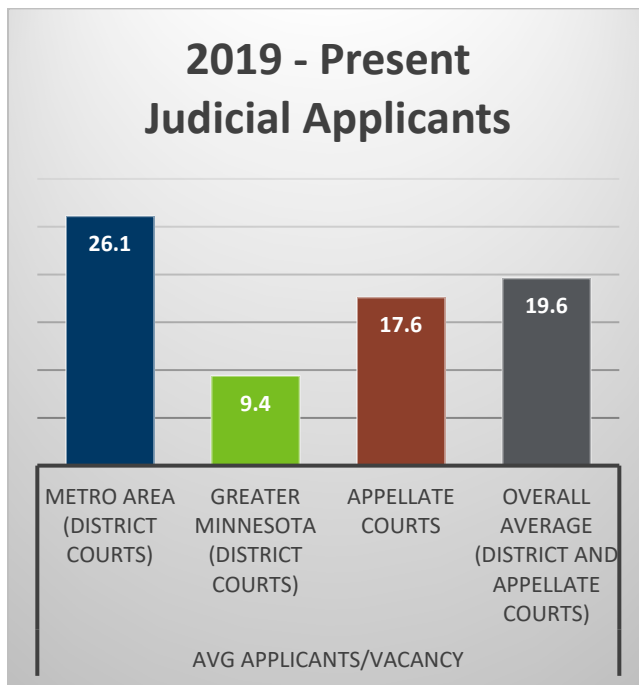
Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan

Compensation Council Q&A Judicial Appointments

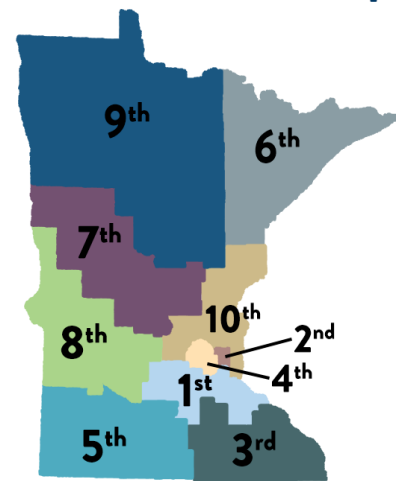
March 10, 2021

1. For recent openings, what has been the average number of applicants?

Since 2019, the average number of applicants per vacancy, including vacancies on the appellate courts, is 19.6. The average number of applicants in the metro judicial districts (First, Second, Fourth, and Tenth) is significantly higher than Greater Minnesota judicial districts (Third, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Ninth). There have been no vacancies in the Eighth Judicial District since 2019.



Judicial District Map



2. Are you noticing any trends in appointments that are harder to recruit qualified candidates for? (i.e. greater MN, diverse candidates, etc.)

Yes. Although the Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s Office, the Commission on Judicial Selection, and various affinity bar groups have partnered to organize outreach and recruiting events around the state, we still have difficulty recruiting candidates in greater Minnesota. Openings in greater Minnesota regularly attract fewer than 10 applicants. In four instances since 2019, there have been 6 or fewer applicants. In the metro area, we’ve struggled to maintain a consistent pool of diverse applicants.

3. Has salary been a challenge when recruiting candidates?

Yes. Salary is a challenge when recruiting candidates. Lawyers in private practice would dramatically reduce their earning capacity if appointed as a judge.

In Minnesota, many first-year associates at law firms can expect to receive almost as much compensation (\$140,000 – \$150,000) as a district court judge ([\\$153,345](#)), and most private practice lawyers can expect significantly higher salaries after just a few years of practice. First-year associates at some Minneapolis firms receive higher compensation (\$170,000 - \$190,000) than a Minnesota Court of Appeals judge ([\\$163,354](#)) and, in some cases, higher than an associate justice ([\\$173,363](#)) on the Minnesota Supreme Court.

In metro districts, where there are significantly more applicants, there is a greater practice diversity among applicants, including applicants from private practice. Certain vacancies in greater Minnesota, however, have had only candidates from the public sector apply, and salary may be one reason that more lawyers in private practice do not seek appointment. The Commission on Judicial Selection seeks practice diversity among applicants and wishes to draw from the largest possible pool of qualified candidates.

4. Is there any data or information on the number of candidates coming from the private sector versus the public sector?

In addition to having a Judiciary that reflects the racial and gender diversity of our communities, it is important to have a bench that reflects the professional diversity of the legal community. While we don't have data on the professional backgrounds of all judicial applicants from 2019 to present, we've gathered data on finalists (those who interviewed with the Governor) and appointees. Given the factors discussed above, it is not surprising that a majority of the finalists and appointees come from the public sector.

