

<https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/governance-judicial-conference/about-judicial-conference>

June 9, 2020

## About the Judicial Conference

The Judicial Conference of the United States is the national policy-making body for the federal courts.

## Membership

*The Chief Justice of the United States is the presiding officer of the Judicial Conference.* Membership is comprised of the chief judge of each judicial circuit, the Chief Judge of the Court of International Trade, and a district judge from each regional judicial circuit.

A circuit chief judge's term on the Conference is concurrent with his or her term as chief judge of the circuit. Section 45 of title 28, United States Code, provides that, with limited exceptions, the chief judge of a circuit may serve for seven years or until attaining the age of seventy years, whichever comes first. Similar provisions apply to the Chief Judge of the Court of International Trade. See U.S.C. 258.

District judge representatives are elected for terms of not less than three nor more than five successive years, as established by majority vote of all circuit and district

judges of the circuit (28 U.S.C. § 331). By Conference policy, terms are effective and expire on October 1 of any given year.

March 2020 Members

[https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/jcus\\_members\\_2020.pdf](https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/jcus_members_2020.pdf)

Organization

*The Conference operates through a network of committees created to address and advise on a wide variety of subjects such as information technology, personnel, probation and pretrial services, space and facilities, security, judicial salaries and benefits, budget, defender services, court administration, and rules of practice and procedure. The Chief Justice has sole authority to make committee appointments.*

The Executive Committee of the Judicial Conference serves as the senior executive arm of the Conference, acting on its behalf between sessions on matters requiring emergency action as authorized by the Chief Justice; the Executive Committee is not otherwise a policy-making committee of the Judicial Conference. Among its responsibilities, the *Executive Committee reviews the jurisdiction of Conference committees, prepares proposed consent and discussion calendars for meetings of the Conference, and establishes and publishes procedures for assembling agendas and schedules of events in preparation for Conference sessions.*

The Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts serves as Secretary to the Judicial Conference and also is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee, coordinates administrative support to the Conference itself and its Executive Committee, and also coordinates the activities of senior Administrative Office professional staff who dedicate all or a substantial portion of their time to the work of the Judicial Conference and its committees.

### Sessions

The statute requires the Chief Justice to summon the Judicial Conference into session annually, at such time and place in the United States as he may designate. Traditionally, the Chief Justice has called the annual meeting in September and a semi-annual session in March. The members are required to attend each session unless excused by the Chief Justice, who will designate a replacement. The Conference generally meets in Washington, D.C., at the Supreme Court building.

Separate meetings of the circuit chief judges and the district judge representatives typically follow the Conference session and are chaired by judges selected from the membership. The meetings are held at the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building in Washington, D.C.

### Judicial Conference Committees

Judicial Conference committees review issues within their established jurisdictions and make policy recommendations to the Conference. The committees are policy-advisory entities and are not involved in making day-to-day management decisions for the United States courts or for the Administrative Office. Judicial Conference committees derive their jurisdiction and legal basis for existence from the Conference itself and the Chief Justice as presiding officer. The committees and their chairs have no independent authority or charge apart from those conferred upon them by the Conference or its Executive Committee.

#### Matters Before Committees

All matters to go before the Judicial Conference are ordinarily considered by a committee prior to Conference consideration. Sources for matters to be studied and considered by Conference committees include, among others, the Chief Justice of the United States, the Executive Committee, the jurisdictional statements of Conference committees, the Conference Secretary (Director of the Administrative Office), Congress, statutory requirements, federal judges, circuit judicial councils, and other Conference committees.

Requests for consideration of items by the Judicial Conference of the United States or one of its committees should be directed to the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

## Committee Appointments

*The Chief Justice has sole authority to make committee appointments.* The Director of the Administrative Office and the Judicial Conference Secretariat Officer, collate the expressed interests of judges and the recommendations of others who may be considered for appointments, and the Director forwards the suggestions to the Chief Justice.

Committee appointments rotate on the first of October each year. As a general rule, committee appointments are for a term of three years, subject to one reappointment. Terms are staggered to minimize turnover each year.

Judges who desire committee service or wish to recommend others for assignments may make their interests or recommendations known at any time, in writing, to the Director of the Administrative Office (Attention: Judicial Conference Secretariat). A permanent file is maintained for reference during the annual appointment process.