

Fred Torrisi

4/14/25

State Affairs, Alaska Senate  
By email

Re: SJR 13

Dear Senators Kawasaki and Bjorkman,

I am a 50 year member of the Alaska Bar, and I served as a superior court judge for 15 years, plus part-time for another two. I now have Emeritus status with the Bar, doing some *pro bono* work for Alaska Legal Services.

The job of a trial judge is to resolve cases as fairly and as quickly as possible. In my case, this meant primarily matters in Dillingham, Unalaska and Naknek, but I also presided over trials held in Kodiak, Valdez, St. Paul, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Palmer, Bethel and Nome. Before being appointed a judge, I was a lawyer based in Dillingham for some 20 years.

While I probably had a case or two each year that might be deemed "political," my primary job was the hundreds of criminal cases filed in my three courts, plus children's and family law matters and other civil cases. I also handled appeals from administrative agencies, and covered other courts when the local judge was preempted or needed to recuse him or herself.

When I applied for this job in 1996, I received reasonably good recommendations from my fellow lawyers. I believe that this was in part because I lived in Dillingham, where the new judgeship was based, and the lawyers who practiced in rural Alaska knew from working with me that I could handle all aspects of the job. This includes having some local knowledge, scheduling, moving cases along, travel, picking juries in remote locations, and otherwise making the judicial

system work. These skills, plus patience, organization, perseverance, flexibility and tolerance are a big part of the job of a trial judge.

When I need a doctor, I try to find another doctor to give me a recommendation, and I always urge those who need an attorney to do the same thing. It is very rarely about one's political leanings, and always about diligence, attention to detail, staying in touch. The best judges work hard, do their homework and decide cases based only on the facts of the case and the law. The evaluations done by the Judicial Council almost invariably reveal who these lawyers are, and make sure that we don't end up with those who don't have the requisite skills, or who will prioritize their own agenda.

As I read about the tens of millions of dollars poured into the election for a Wisconsin Supreme Court justice, I again thank the Alaskans who wrote our State Constitution 70 years ago. We have some very real problems in Alaska, but our judicial selection system is not among them. I urge the Committee to again reject this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this.

Sincerely,

Fred Torrisi