



FEDERAL JUDICIAL SCREENING COMMITTEES

This table lists the judicial screening committees that appear to be in operation as of August 2017, or that stand ready to operate in the event of a vacancy. These committees are unofficial bodies that many U.S. Senators (and sometimes U.S. House members) establish to help them screen applicants for presidentially appointed judicial and law enforcement positions in their states.

The information in this table comes from the regularly updated Options for Federal Judicial Screening Committees¹ database, which in turn is based on information from legislators’ websites, press reports, and conversations with committee members.

“POSITIONS CONSIDERED” indicates the positions for which the committee screens candidates: DJ=district court; CA=court of appeals seats traditionally filled from the state; USA=U.S. attorney; USM=U.S. marshal.

Table with 5 columns: STATE (# of district judgeships), YEAR CREATED, COMMENTS, COMPOSITION, POSITIONS CONSIDERED. It lists committees for Arizona (2016) and Colorado (2015).

¹ Available at http://iaals.du.edu/quality-judges/publications/options-federal-judicial-screening-committees-second-edition.

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
Connecticut (8)	2017	Senators Blumenthal and Murphy (both D) “appointed a committee of their own to solicit and vet candidates” for a vacancy that arose January 2017.		DJ
Delaware (4)	2017	Senators Carper and Coon (both D) created a committee (variously described as “bipartisan,” “independent,” and “judicial nominating advisory”) to recommend potential nominees for two vacancies that arose in February and May 2017.	“Bipartisan”	DJ
Florida (37)	2011; reconstituted in 2017	Florida’s senators have used a “Federal Judicial Nominating Commission” ² since 1974. Senators Nelson (D) and Rubio (R) “restocked” the commission in August 2017. According to Senator Rubio, both senators have veto power if they have objections to potential nominees. (Senator Rubio announced in May 2017 that the commission would no longer recommend potential U.S. attorney nominees; rather, the senators themselves would make the recommendations.)	95 members serving in three “conferences” corresponding to the state’s three judicial districts; the senator whose party holds the presidency appoints the chairs and a majority of members	DJ
Georgia (18)	2017	Senators Isakson and Perdue (both R) each tapped three attorneys to serve on a “judicial advisory committee.”	6 members – all attorneys	DJ, USA
Hawaii (4)	2015	Senators Horono and Schatz (both D) created a Federal Judicial Selection Commission to recommend potential nominees for a 2015 vacancy that still exists.	7 members—3 appointed by each senator, chair jointly appointed; includes lawyers and non-lawyers	DJ ³
Illinois (30)	2017	Senators Durbin and Duckworth (both D) use a	One committee for each federal	DJ, USA, USM

² While several states label their screening committees as “nominating commissions,” this is a misnomer. These committees advise senators, who in turn recommend potential nominees, but nomination lies with the president.

³ Past Hawaii senators have adopted a formal charter for the Federal Judicial Selection Commission, whose role has included recommending potential nominees for relevant Ninth Circuit vacancies. Our research indicates that Senators Horono and Schatz have not yet taken this step.

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
		joint committee for each federal district. (“Committees will review candidates identified by the Trump Administration and the Illinois Republican Congressional delegation for vacant...”) Representative Shimkus (R) submitted recommendations for USA positions in May 2017.	district—Northern, Southern, Central; 5 members each; all lawyers	
Iowa (5)	2015	Senator Grassley (R) formed a Judicial Selection Commission to recommend nominees for two vacancies. Grassley submitted the recommendations “in consultation with Senator Joni Ernst.”	5 members, all lawyers	DJ
Louisiana (22)	2017	Senator Cassidy (R) formed a vetting committee to recommend nominees for four DJ vacancies and three USA vacancies. Senator Kennedy (R) is not participating.	8 members, including 3 non-lawyers	DJ, USA
Maine (3)	2017	Senator Collins (R) formed a Federal Judicial Appointments Committee to “evaluate candidates for Senate-confirmed positions.”	8 members, including 4 lawyers and 4 non-lawyers	DJ, USA, USM
Massachusetts (13)	2013; reconvened in 2015, 2017	Senators Warren and Markey (both D) use an Advisory Committee on Massachusetts Judicial Nominations.	12 members, all lawyers (7 review applications for Boston vacancies only; an additional 5 review all applications)	DJ
Minnesota (7)	2014; reformed in 2016 2016	Senators Klobuchar and Franken (both D) reformed their “Judicial Selection Committee” in October 2016 to recommend potential nominees for two vacancies. Congressman Erik Paulsen (R) formed a judicial selection committee in December 2016 to recommend candidates for the two vacancies. Those who had already applied with the Klobuchar-Franken committee were not required to resubmit applications but could provide additional information.	8 members— 6 lawyers, a former judge, a non-lawyer; bipartisan 8 members—lawyers, sitting judges, and former judges	DJ DJ

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
Ohio (20)	2009; reconstituted in 2017	In June 2017, Senators Portman (R) and Brown (D) created a “bipartisan judiciary advisory commission to assist them in identifying the best candidates to fill vacancies on the U.S. District Courts for the Southern and Northern Districts of Ohio.”	28 member-commission, including some non- lawyers	DJ
Oregon (6)	2009, apparently reconstituted from earlier committee	<p>A July 2009 press release from Senator Wyden (D) announced that in April he and Senator Merkley (D) had appointed “a 13-member selection committee to find replacements” for two retiring district judges. A separate panel was named in August 2009 to recommend USA candidates. In July 2017, Senator Merkley said he planned to continue the committee process that “has served the state well for years,” and Senator Wyden said he was working with Senator Merkley and Representative Walden to develop a “process for forwarding good candidates.”</p> <p>In January 2017, Representative Walden (R) recommended potential nominees for Ninth Circuit and U.S. attorney vacancies.</p>	13 members—Wyden: 9 (6 of whom were women or from minority groups); Merkley: 4	DJ, USA, USM
Pennsylvania (38)	2011; reconstituted in 2017	Screening committees were first used in 1981. Senators Casey (D) and Toomey (R) announced in March 2017 that they would “continue their bipartisan judicial agreement” in recommending nominees for current vacancies. The senators each appoint nine members and one co-chair.	2 committees (one for the Eastern District, one for the Western District) of 20 members each	DJ

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
Texas (52)	2009; reconstituted in 2013	Senators first used a Federal Judicial Evaluation Committee in 1986. After the 2008 presidential election, and following statements by Texas House Democrats that they would forward prospective nominees to the White House, Senators Hutchinson and Cornyn (both R) released the names of members of a newly constituted committee. In January 2017, Senators Cornyn and Cruz (both R) announced that they were accepting applications for existing vacancies.	35 members—all lawyers; bipartisan	DJ, USA
Vermont (2)	2009; reformed in 2014	Senators Leahy (D) and Sanders (I) appointed a “Vermont Judicial Nominating Commission.” Representative Welch (D) also has a role in the process.	9 lawyers—Leahy: 3, Sanders: 3, Vermont Bar Association: 3; “nonpartisan”	DJ
Washington (12)	2002; reconstituted in 2012, 2015	Senators Murray and Cantwell (both D) and the state’s senior House member (whether D or R) use “bipartisan selection committees” (one for each district) to recommend potential nominees. In April 2017, the senators asked President Trump to consider 5 potential nominees for 3 vacancies submitted in 2015.	Eastern District: 8 members—4 R, 4D, all lawyers Western District: 6 members—3 R, 3D	DJ
Wisconsin (7)	2013; renewed in 2017	A Federal Judicial Nominating Commission has been in place since 1979. Senator Baldwin (D) and Senator Johnson (R) formed a committee in 2013 and renewed their agreement in 2017. President Trump submitted a nominee for a Seventh Circuit vacancy in August 2017 who did not come out of the committee process.	6 members, with each senator appointing 3; all lawyers ⁴	DJ, CA, USA

⁴ Under the Wisconsin Judicial Nominating Commission’s longstanding charter, the composition of the Senate delegation and party control of the White House determined how commission members were appointed. When Senator Baldwin took office, he pushed for the charter to be revised so that senators appoint an equal number of members.

**FEDERAL JUDICIAL SCREENING COMMITTEES
USED DURING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
Alabama (14)	2013	During the Obama administration, as the only Democrat in the state’s congressional delegation, Rep. Sewell (D) set up a “Judicial Screening Committee for Federal District Judgeships.” Senators Shelby (R) and Strange (R) did not use a committee for two recent nominees.	7 members—legal scholars, judges, and lawyers	DJ
California (61)	2001; reconstituted in 2009	Then-Senator Boxer and Senator Feinstein (both D) each used a bipartisan “Judicial Advisory Committee” in each of California’s four judicial districts to alternate recommending nominees for vacancies. According to our research, Senators Feinstein and Harris (both D) have not yet announced how they will approach the process.	From 5 to 7 members (all lawyers) in 8 committees (2 for each of the 4 judicial districts)	DJ, USA, USM
D.C. (15)	1993; reconstituted in 2009	D.C. Delegate Holmes Norton (D) created a committee during the Clinton administration and appointed a reconstituted “Federal Law Enforcement Nominating Commission” in early 2009. Holmes Norton unsuccessfully requested “consultation courtesy” on three June 2017 nominations.	16 members—lawyers and non-lawyers	DJ
Michigan (19)	2009	Then-Senator Levin and Senator Stabenow (both D) used a “broad-based screening committee” to recommend candidates for four vacancies in 2013. Senators Stabenow and Peters (both D) have requested applications but, according to our research, have not established a committee for two current vacancies.	“Legal experts”	DJ
Montana (3)	2010; reconstituted in 2012	Then-Senator Baucus (D) announced the creation of a commission in late 2012 to recommend candidates for two vacancies. There are no current vacancies.	9 members—8 lawyers and a state supreme court justice	DJ

STATE (# of district judgeships)	YEAR CREATED	COMMENTS	COMPOSITION	POSITIONS CONSIDERED
New York (52)	At least since Senators D'Amato and Moynihan	Google searches and other sources indicate that Senator Schumer (D) has used a judicial screening panel in the past, though Schumer's website makes no mention of it. Senator Gillibrand (D) apparently does not use a committee, but the senators may have shared nominating responsibilities. In July 2017, the Trump administration sent the senators a list of nominees for New York judgeships, including two vacancies on the Second Circuit, and U.S. attorneys.	Approx. 12, apparently all lawyers According to a 2011 article, Schumer's office "refuse[d] to discuss the membership of the panel."	DJ (and, according to one committee member's website, USA)