

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

WISCONSIN COURT SYSTEM



The Wisconsin Judicial Conference, as established by Supreme Court Rule 70.15, is an annual, multi-day conference focused on judiciary processes, rules, and structure.

Attendees include Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals judges, circuit courts judges, reserve judges, municipal judges (designated by the Wisconsin Municipal Judges Association), and representatives from tribal courts. Supreme Court Rule mandates that the Conference also hold special meetings when appropriate.

The Conference includes the Chief Justice's State of the Judiciary address; the Director of State Courts' State of the Director's Office address; a general business meeting at which reports of the committees are delivered, committee elections are held, and resolutions are presented; and educational programs. The agenda is set by the Executive Committee of the Judicial Conference, with the assistance of a program committee.

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee has general charge over the

affairs, policies, and activities of the Judicial Conference and is comprised of the following members:

- The Chief Justice (chair);
- The next senior Justice (first vice-chair);
- A second vice-chair;
- A secretary; and
- Five other Conference members, including one appellate or reserve judge and three circuit court judges.

Apart from the chair and the first vice-chair, the members of the Executive Committee are elected by the Conference. No member may serve more than two three-year terms.

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE STANDING COMMITTEES

Conference bylaws have created the Nominating Committee and five standing committees. Committee members are elected by the Conference. Special study committees may also be established. The five standing committees are:

Criminal Jury Instructions Committee

This 11-member committee prepares model criminal jury instructions for circuit court judges. Members may serve a maximum of two five-year terms.

Civil Jury Instructions Committee

This seven-member committee prepares model civil jury instructions for circuit judges. Members may serve a maximum of two five-year terms.

Uniform Bond Committee

This seven-member committee prepares various uniform deposit and bail schedules for misdemeanors and traffic offenses; violations of Department of Natural Resources rules; trespass to land; certain alcohol violations; tobacco violations; harassment; violations of University of Wisconsin rules; drug paraphernalia offenses; and safety violations. Uniform deposit and bail schedules are subject to approval by the Conference. Members of this committee may serve a maximum of two three-year terms.

Legislative Committee

This nine-member committee is comprised of the Chief Justice or their designee and eight other judges. No member may serve more than two three-year terms. The Committee of Chief Judges — separate from the Judicial Conference — also names a chief judge to be a liaison with the Legislative Committee.

This committee's purpose is to review pending legislation, and it provide information on proposed legislation. To obtain a broad spectrum of viewpoints, judges are solicited to review bills within their areas of expertise and interest. The committee may also seek to propose legislation if it is not contrary to prior positions taken by the Judicial Conference or the Executive Committee.

Judicial Conference Members of the Judicial Council

The Conference elects four circuit court judges to serve on the Judicial Council, which is governed by Wis. Stat. § 758.13. The judges may not serve more than two four-year terms. The Council recommends to the Legislature and the Supreme Court changes in the way the courts conduct business, including statutory changes for adoption by the Legislature or the Supreme Court, pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 751.12.

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is comprised of the judges who chair the standing committees and the secretary of the Conference. Chairs of the standing committees are selected annually by the members of the standing committees.

The Nominating Committee advises the members of the Conference of open positions on the Executive Committee and the standing committees for which they may seek election. Nominations are then solicited. From these nominations, the Nominating Committee chooses one candidate for each open position and notifies the members of the Conference of its slate prior to the annual meeting. Nominations may also be made by members of the Conference. The members of the Conference vote to fill the open positions.

STUDY COMMITTEES

The Judicial Conference or the Executive Committee may create study committees to examine particular topics. These study committees must report their studies and recommendations at the next annual meeting of the Conference. The number of members is generally determined by the Conference, while members are selected by the Executive Committee. The tenure of a study committee is usually one year, unless extended by the Conference.

JUDICIAL CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS

Prior to the annual meeting, the secretary of the Conference solicits resolutions from Conference members. These resolutions relate to a wide range of issues. Each resolution is sent to the members of the Conference prior to the annual meeting and is voted on at the business meeting. The Executive Committee must indicate its approval or disapproval, or it may suggest modifications to each resolution before forwarding it to the Conference for action.

Any resolution which involves legislative changes must also be submitted to the Legislative Committee for review prior to the resolution being voted upon at the annual meeting. The recommendation of the Legislative Committee must then be submitted to the Executive Committee. If the resolution is approved by the Executive Committee, the resolution and the Legislative Committee's analysis are then submitted to the Conference. If the Executive Committee does not approve the resolution, the resolution is not submitted to the Conference — unless two-thirds of the membership in attendance at the business meeting vote to bring it to the floor.