

# Judicial Clerkships

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AMY KILLORAN & LAURA RAMSEY

MAY 29, 2015, LCLD SCHOLARS CONFERENCE

# What is a clerkship?

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One- or two-year salaried positions with federal, state, local, administrative, or international judges.

Work varies with court and individual judges, but law clerks at the trial and appellate levels participate in all aspects of the judicial process.

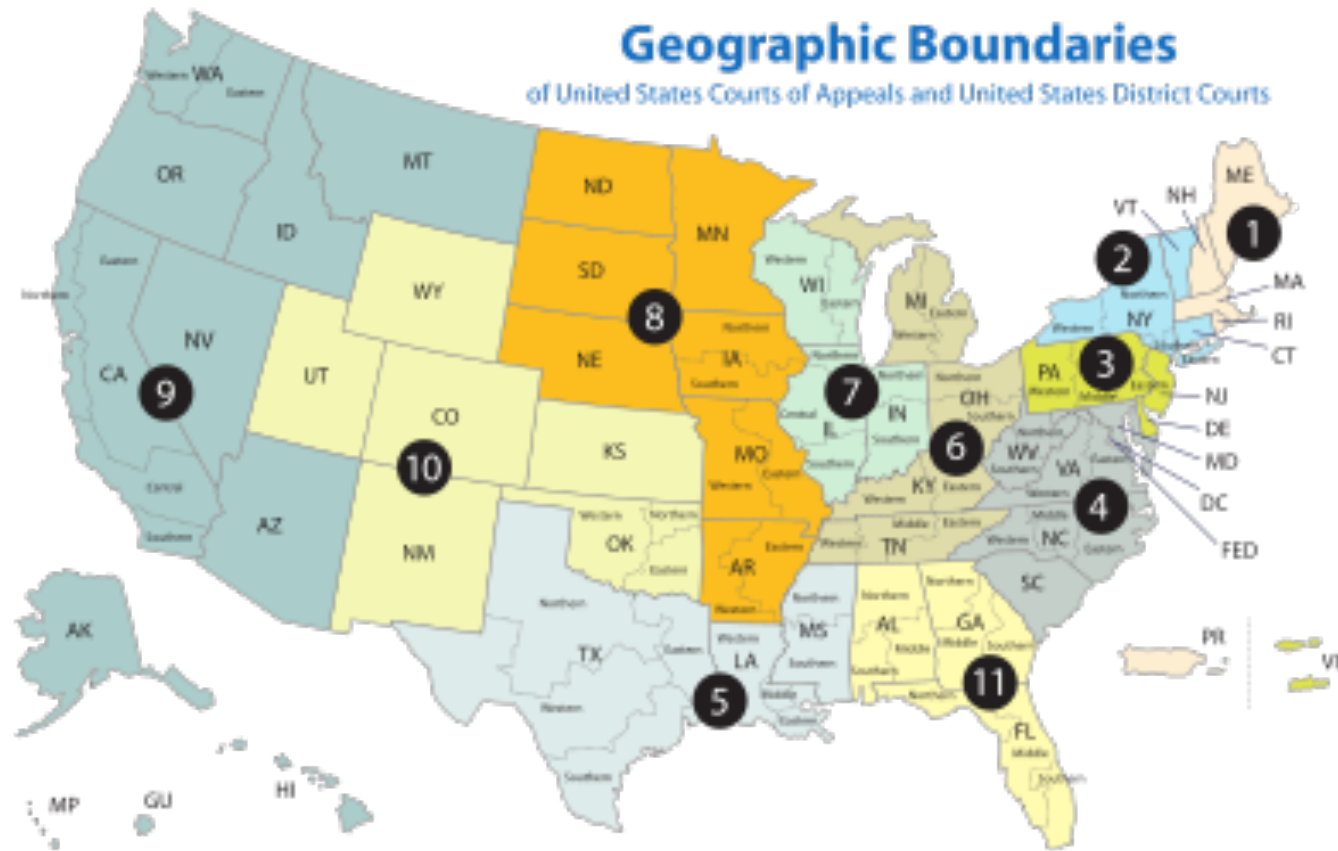
# Structure of the federal court system

## The United States Federal Courts



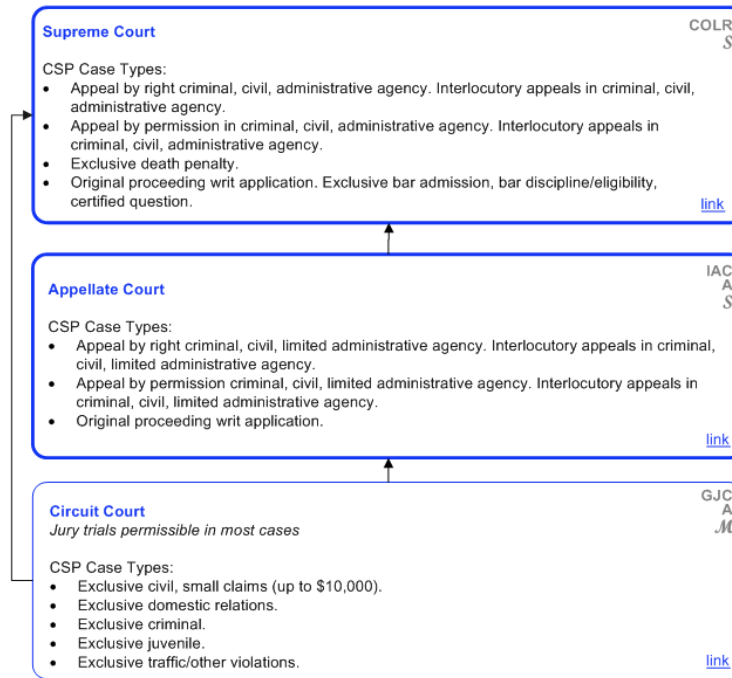
# Where are the federal circuits?

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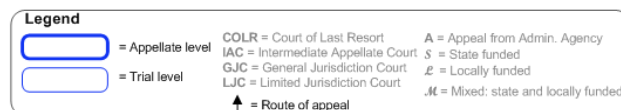


# Structure of a sample state court system

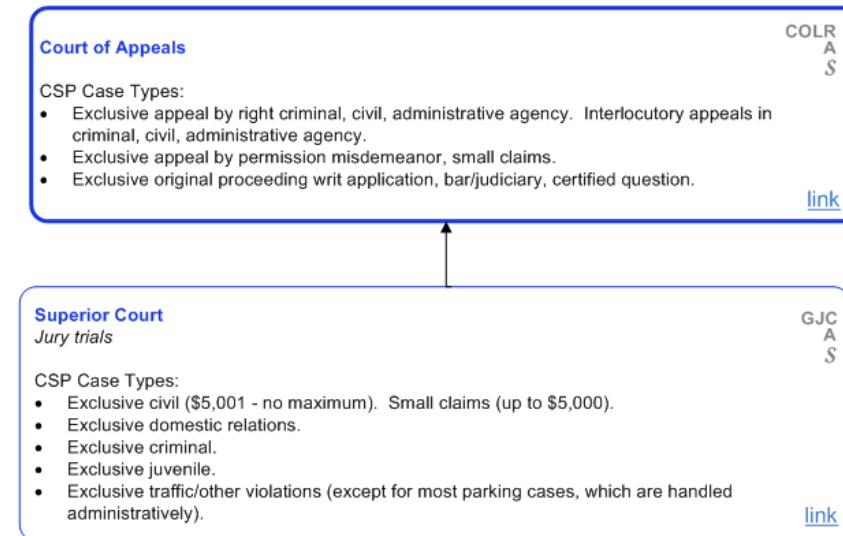
## Illinois



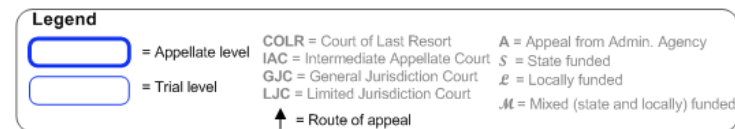
AOC Web site: [www.state.il.us/court](http://www.state.il.us/court)



## District of Columbia



AOC Website: <http://www.dccourts.gov/>



# Why should I clerk?

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A clerkship gives you the opportunity to:

- Hone legal research and writing skills;
- Gain knowledge of and experience with court procedures;
- Observe a variety of lawyering styles and skills;
- Discuss legal theories with an expert;
- Establish connections to a local bar; and
- Develop a mentor relationship with a judge.

# What are the benefits of clerking?

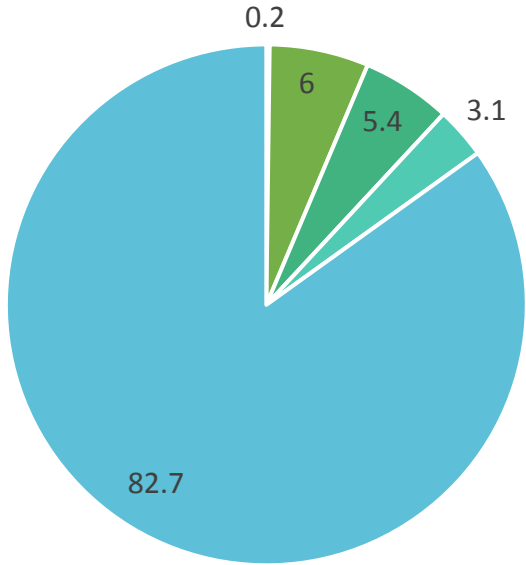
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- Sets you up for success in your legal career
- Makes you a better lawyer
- Opens career doors
- Provides mentorship
- Builds your legal network

# Lack of Diversity Among Clerks

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All Law Clerks (2013)



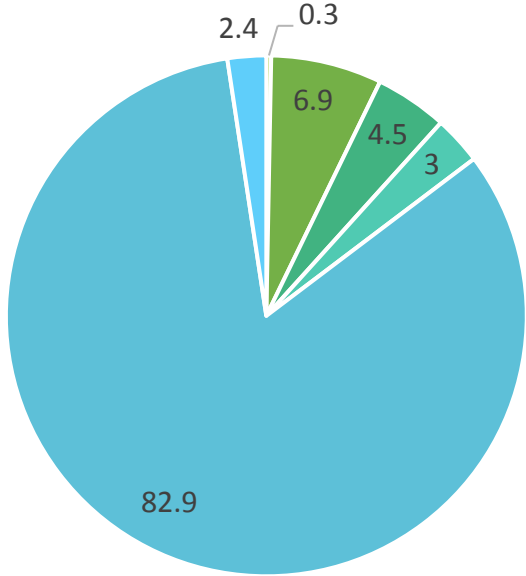
■ Native American   ■ Asian/Pacific Islander   ■ African-American   ■ Hispanic   ■ White   ■ Multi-Racial



# Lack of Diversity Among Clerks

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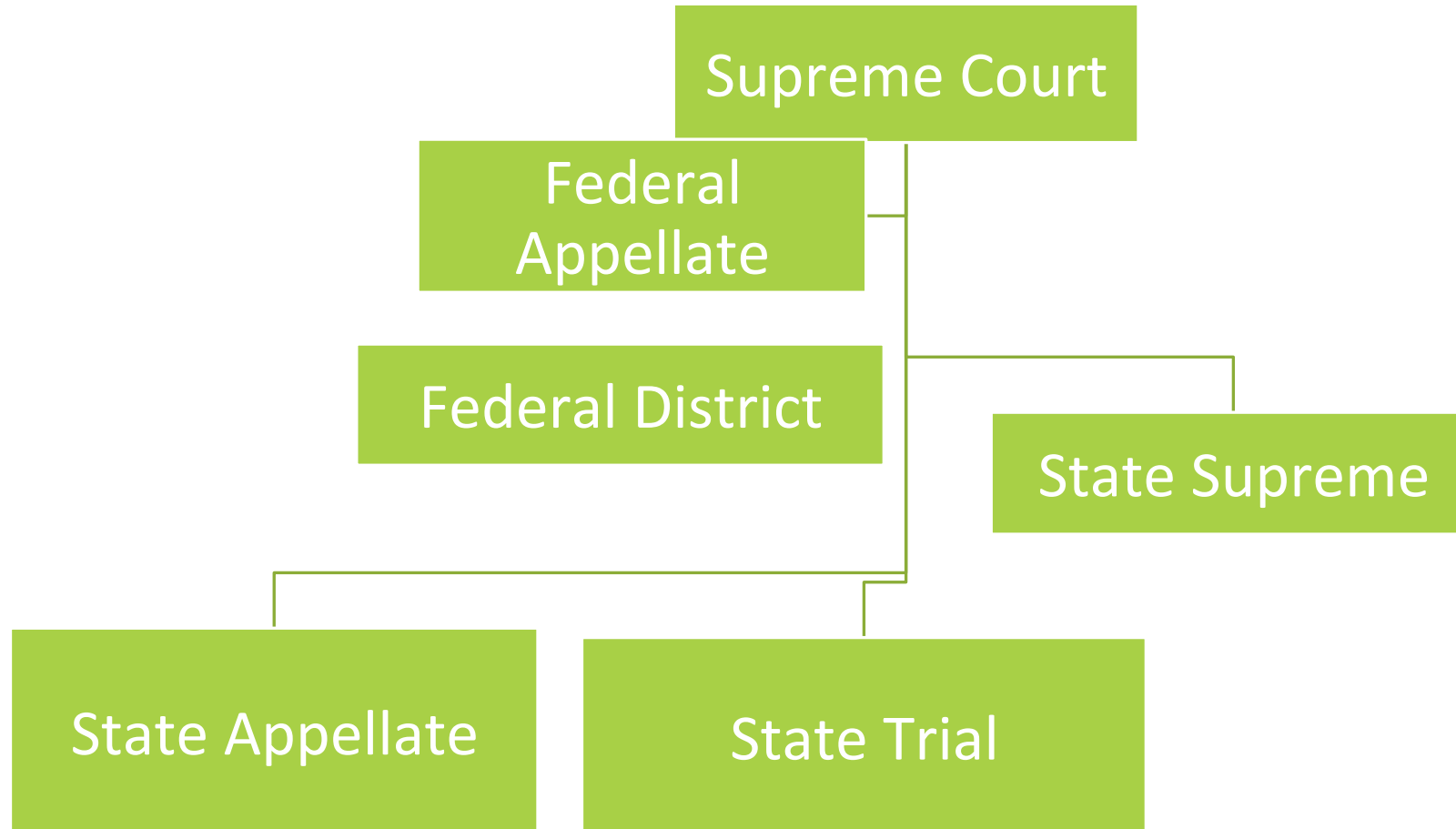
Federal Clerks



■ Native American   ■ Asian/Pacific Islander   ■ African-American   ■ Hispanic   ■ White   ■ Multi-Racial

# Where should I clerk?

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# Am I a viable clerkship candidate?

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## Judges consider:

- Law school
- Work experience
- Journal membership
- Performance in law school
- Letters of recommendation and calls from recommenders
- Geographic ties

# Can I afford it?

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Pay for law clerks varies by location and type of clerkship.

For federal salary information, see the U.S. Courts website (generally, JS-11 for new graduates): <http://www.uscourts.gov/careers/compensation/judiciary-salary-plan-pay-rates>

State salaries vary greatly. As a starting point, see the Vermont Law School's *Guide to State Judicial Clerkship Procedures*: <http://forms.vermontlaw.edu/career/guides/>

Also,

- Many law firms provide clerkship bonuses if you begin after a clerkship.
- Clerkships may qualify for public service loan forgiveness.

# When do I apply?

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Timing varies by judge, court, and location.

Generally, 1-2 years before the clerkship begins.

Some judges will indicate how many years' worth of grades they require.

- Fall 2L year
- Early spring 2L year
- Summer after 2L year
- 3L year or later, with some practice experience

# How do I apply?

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Typical components of a clerkship application are:

- Cover letter
- Resume
- Law school transcript
- Writing sample
- 3 letters of recommendation

# What will my future employer think?

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Generally, employers recognize the value to them of you spending a year as a judicial law clerk, including the training you receive and the prestige it incurs.

Most large law firms will defer an offer for a judicial clerkship, provided it begins right after law school, before starting at the firm.

Government Honors programs are open to judicial law clerks.

# What programs exist for diverse candidates?

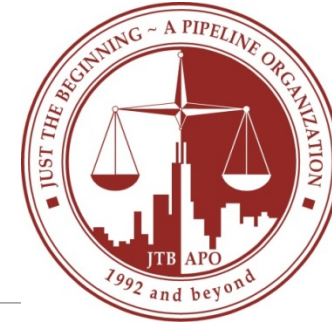
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- Just The Beginning: A Pipeline Organization
- ABA Judicial Clerkship Program
- Local programs



# Just The Beginning: A Pipeline Organization

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- Founded in 1992 to expand the diversity of the legal field. JTB-APO is a not-for-profit organization of judges, lawyers, and other citizens dedicated to improving the legal system, preserving the history of the integration of the judiciary and promoting diversity in the legal profession.
- Programs for Middle School, High School, and Law Students.
- JTB Offers pipeline programs aimed at inspiring young students and increasing diversity in the legal profession and the judiciary.

# JRC-JTB Summer Internship Program

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- JTB-APO partners with the Judicial Resources Committee to offer federal judicial internships
- Founded in 2011 by Judge Ann Claire Williams (7<sup>th</sup> Cir.) and Judge Gerald Bruce Lee (E.D. Va.) with JRC Committee
- 90 participating federal district and circuit judges
- 200+ law students placed in first 4 years
- Program has screening and training components and offers an excellent training opportunity to hone skills sought by judges hiring law clerks
- 22 JRC-JTB program graduates have secured judicial clerkships

# JTB Share The Wealth Clerkship Program

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- Founded in 2001 by Judge Lee, Judge James Spencer, Judge Raymond Jackson, and Judge Alexander Williams.
- Share the Wealth is a referral program run by judges in partnership with JTB-APO. Participating judges screen qualified law student applicants and conduct panel interviews with students to identify candidates for clerkship positions.
- At the conclusion of this initial process, JTB-APO shares application packages for those students who have not received an offer with additional judges who request to receive applicant information through JTB-APO.
- Judges regularly contact JTB-APO to seek assistance in identifying competitive candidates from diverse backgrounds for consideration. JTB-APO utilizes a network of former interns and clerks and the organization website to identify candidates and promote opportunities.

# JTB Share The Wealth Clerkship Program

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- JTB-APO's Share the Wealth Program has resulted in the hiring of nearly 100 diverse students in federal clerkships in an effort to increase diversity among Federal Court clerks. JTB-APO utilizes a widespread law school network in addition to the JRC-JTB intern alumni pool to continue to place diverse law students in federal clerkships.
- Applicants for this program should discuss their commitment to civic engagement and interest in diversity issues in their cover letter.
- Complete applications are due August, 2015 – specific date to be released by the end of June, 2015.
- Applications are submitted through OSCAR unless otherwise specified by a hiring judge.

# What do judges say?

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Judges often express a desire for increased diversity among their clerkship applicant pool.

“Consider visiting law schools with a minority student population to share recruitment practices and insights about the law clerk hiring process. These visits may encourage more minority law school students to pursue federal clerkships and further the Judiciary’s goal of reflecting the communities it serves.” –*Federal Law Clerk Best Hiring Practices*, [www.oscar.uscourts.gov](http://www.oscar.uscourts.gov).

Judges agree that clerkship opportunities should be available to candidates, and wish to see greater diversity in backgrounds, law schools, race, gender, and ethnicity. Judge Patti Millett, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, expresses that she seeks out diverse applicants. –*DC Circuit’s Patricia Millett Reflects on Clerking, Diversity*, National Law Journal’s Blog of the Legal Times, January 28, 2015.

# Tips for Success from Judge Gerald Bruce Lee

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[video]

# Questions?

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# Contact us

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Amy Killoran  
Assistant Director, Judicial Clerkships  
Georgetown University Law Center  
202-662-9311  
[alk59@law.georgetown.edu](mailto:alk59@law.georgetown.edu)



Laura Ramsey  
Programs Director  
Just the Beginning-A Pipeline Organization  
312-258-4868  
[lramsey@jtba.org](mailto:lramsey@jtba.org)