

PRESS RELEASE

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ALASKA COURT SYSTEM  
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PRESIDING JUDGES APPOINTED FOR 2012

Chief Justice Walter L. Carpeneti of the Alaska Supreme Court announces the appointment of four presiding judges: Superior Court Judge Trevor N. Stephens for the First Judicial District; Superior Court Judge Ben Esch for the Second Judicial District; Superior Court Judge Sen K. Tan for the Third Judicial District; and Superior Court Judge Douglas Blankenship for the Fourth Judicial District.

The chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court appoints a presiding judge for each of the four judicial districts. The appointments are for a one year term and cover a calendar year period, and incumbents are eligible for reappointment.

In addition to regular judicial duties, the presiding judge of each judicial district has the administrative responsibility to supervise the assignment of cases and administrative actions of judges and court personnel, to keep current the business of courts, to review and recommend budgets, and to review the operation of the trial courts in the district to assure adherence to statewide court objectives and policies.

Judge Stephens was appointed to the superior court in Ketchikan in 2000. Prior to his appointment Judge Stephens worked in private practice, as an Assistant Public Defender, and as an Assistant District Attorney and District Attorney. He received both his undergraduate and law degree from Willamette University College of Law. He serves on the court system's Family

Rules and Judicial Education Committee and is also a member of the Three Judge Sentencing Panel. He was born and raised in Ketchikan.

Judge Esch received his undergraduate degree from MacMurray College and his law degree from Arizona State University. In law school he was a member of the law review and clerked for the Arizona Supreme Court. After private practice in Alaska for over twenty years, in 1996 he was appointed to the superior court bench in Nome. He has served as mentor judge to several judges appointed thereafter. He has served as training judge for the second district for the past ten years. Judge Esch is a member of the Fairness, Diversity & Equality Committee and has been a regular member of the Judicial Conference Planning Committee. He was most recently appointed to CINA Improvement Committee. In 2002 he was elected by the other judges in the state to a position on the Judicial Conduct Commission and currently serves as chair of that commission. This will be Judge Esch's fifth term as presiding judge. The Second Judicial District covers the most northern areas of the state and includes the superior courts in Barrow, Nome and Kotzebue.

Judge Sen K. Tan was appointed to the superior court in 1996. He earned a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in Law from the University of Kent at Canterbury, in England in 1978 and he received his law degree from Northeastern School of Law in 1982. He came to Alaska in 1982 to work as a law clerk for Superior Court Judge Brian C. Shortell in Anchorage. He has remained in the public sector in Anchorage ever since as an Assistant Public Defender, from 1983-1989, then as an Assistant Attorney General from 1989-1996, and finally a Superior Court Judge for the past 15 years. During his time on bench he has served as Chair of the Civil Pattern Jury Instructions Committee, co-chair of the Child in Need of Aid Court Improvement Committee and as a member of the Alaska Supreme Court's Fairness, Diversity and Equality Committee, Domestic Violence Committee, and the Family Law Self-Help Committee.

Judge Blankenship received his undergraduate degree from Ohio State University in 1976 and his law degree from Gonzaga University Law School in 1980. He was appointed to the superior court bench in Fairbanks in 2005. Before appointment to the bench, Judge Blankenship practiced law in Fairbanks for 22 years. Judge Blankenship held the position of an Assistant

Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General in the Alaska Attorney General's Office during the period from December 1990 through January 1996. The remainder of his legal experience was in private practice in Fairbanks. Judge Blankenship serves on the Alaska Court System Civil Rules Committee and the Child in Need of Aide Court Improvement Project. This will be Judge Blankenship's fifth term as presiding judge. The Fourth Judicial District, with a population of about 133, 00, is administered from Fairbanks, and extends from the Canadian border on the east to the Bering Sea on the west, and includes Fairbanks, Tok, Delta Junction, Galena, Healy, Nenana and fort Yukon in the east and Bethel, Chevak, Hooper Bay, Aniak, St. Mary's and Emmonak in the west.