

MAKE A DIFFERENCE: APPLY FOR AN IMMIGRATION JUDGE POSITION

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The role of the Immigration Judge is to safeguard our nation through the proper application of the immigration laws and to provide refugee protection or even lawful status to those who are eligible and worthy. For the thousands of noncitizens who appear in immigration court each year, the Immigration Judge is both the face and the representative of the Department of Justice. Each and every day, Immigration Judges make decisions that impact both the individuals that come before the court and the public at large. Each and every day, the work of an Immigration Judge *matters*.

If you are interested in a career where you will always make a difference, apply for an Immigration Judge position. The Executive Office for Immigration Review ([EOIR](#)), the agency responsible for our immigration courts, needs and welcomes talented lawyers from diverse backgrounds to join its distinguished corps of Immigration Judges.

If you are interested in applying for the position, this page will point you in the right direction.



WHAT EXACTLY DOES AN IMMIGRATION JUDGE DO?



Immigration Judges are appointed by the Attorney General of the United States to preside over immigration hearings. Loosely speaking, Immigration Judges decide whether a noncitizen may remain in the United States or must leave the country. Immigration court hearings involve complex immigration law issues and a wide range of relief from removability, and Immigration Judges decide cases involving asylum protection, detention and bond, adjustment to lawful permanent immigration status, and the loss of lawful immigration status.

WHERE ARE THE POSITIONS LOCATED?

There are roughly 70 locations nationwide where Immigration Judges hear cases. Some positions are located in conventional courthouse locations, while others are located in detention facilities or in an office complex that conducts hearings through video teleconferencing. Immigration Judges hear cases both in person and through a virtual medium.

EOIR does not advertise for all locations at all times. Advertisements are based on actual vacancies. Also, when locations are advertised at the same time, applicants can choose more than one location in which they are interested.



WHO CAN APPLY?

EOIR welcomes candidates from diverse backgrounds, both professional and personal, and strives to create a diverse and inclusive judge corps. Qualified individuals from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, veterans, LGBTQ+ individuals, and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply.



Given the nature of the position, candidates with immigration law and/or adjudicatory experience are preferred, but EOIR also appreciates that some of its finest judges come from other backgrounds and welcomes the applications of all highly skilled and motivated professionals.

Position requirements will appear in each advertisement, but the core requirements can generally be summarized as follows:

- An LL.B., J.D., or LL.M. degree
- Active bar membership
- Seven years of post-bar admission legal experience

Additionally, EOIR looks for candidates with good temperament, appropriate demeanor, good courtroom management skills, and skill at conducting proceedings in a courteous, fair and impartial manner.

EOIR is currently reviewing applications and interviewing candidates from the last vacancy announcement for Immigration Judges. While the agency does not currently have an open advertisement for Immigration Judge positions, it expects to announce additional vacancies in the next few months. Please continue checking this page and [USAJOBS](#) for updates. You may wish to sign up for [EOIR's listserve announcing IJ](#) or, for other job postings, visit EOIR's homepage and subscribe for alerts about other opportunities.

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION PROCESS?



The application process involves many steps, and the time it takes to complete varies. For most advertisements, the process takes 3-4 months from the time the advertisement closes to the time an offer is extended.

The steps are as follows:

- Once the application period closes, all applications will be screened for completeness and minimum requirements.
- Those applications that pass the screening will be reviewed, and the strongest candidates will be scheduled for a first round interview.
- The strongest candidates from the first round interview will be scheduled for a second round interview. The second interview is scheduled very close in time to the first.
- The strongest candidates after the second interview will be called and extended a tentative job offer. EOIR only notifies individuals who are selected and does not make non-selection phone calls. However, the referral list will stay open an extended period of time, so your application may be considered again if there is an unexpected vacancy at a location to which you applied.
- The number of selectees varies depending on the expected number of vacancies at each location.
- After receipt of the tentative offer, IJ candidates will be subjected to a preliminary background check, which will include references, bar complaint history, employment history, tax history, credit history, and criminal history. Finalist candidates are required to provide fingerprints and take a drug test.
- Once the background check is completed, finalist candidates are presented to the Deputy Attorney General and then the Attorney General. If selected by the Attorney General, the candidate will be given a firm offer and a start date will be worked out.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?



Instructions.

Follow the instructions completely and carefully, and avoid the common pitfalls.

- *Filing late.* Do not wait until the last minute to file your application. Too many candidates submit their application close to the filing deadline and fail to anticipate Murphy's Laws (such as slow upload speeds or connection errors).

- *Submitting an incomplete application.* Some high-quality candidates never reach the interview stage because they did not provide a necessary document, like a writing sample. Be certain to file every item required as specified in the advertisement. An incomplete application will not be considered.
- *Failing to show minimum qualifications.* Each advertisement requires candidates to respond to some short answer questions, called “Quality Ranking Factors” or QRFs, under the section titled “How You Will Be Evaluated.” You must address each of the QRF questions, even if you do not feel you have a strong answer. For example, you may not feel like you have experience conducting administrative hearings or adjudicating administrative cases – if that is the case, you should discuss some experience you do have that is relevant, a time in your career where you had to be a decider, or something similar.
- *Guessing instead of asking.* Every vacancy announcement has a contact for further information. If anything in advertisement is unclear, do not guess but ask the point of contact.

Background check.

Be mindful that as part of the hiring process an applicant’s background will be thoroughly reviewed for security and suitability. In making a determination regarding suitability for employment, the Department considers a number of factors, including, among other things, a candidate's tax filing and payment history, credit history, candor, and any history of usage of controlled substances. The suitability determination is based on an applicant's completed security forms, fingerprint and credit checks, as well as a full field FBI background investigation and tax and bar checks. Upon receiving a tentative offer, applicants will be provided contact information for the Office of Attorney Recruitment and Management, where they can direct questions about the suitability review process. A tentative offer can be withdrawn if a serious suitability and/or security concern is raised during the background check process.

Locations.

Apply only for locations that you are serious about and where you will actually accept an offer. Do not apply for every location that is open, thinking it will help you get an interview and that you will be able to select only the location you really want later. You very well may be offered a location that ranks at the bottom of your list, but it may be at the top of agency need for your skill set. If you are insincere about the locations you indicated, you may get selected for a location you do not want.

You cannot be hired for a location to which you did not apply, so please do not ask to add locations at a later date. To be considered for additional locations you must apply to a future advertisement and indicate those new locations.

Coming on board.

If you get a second interview, that means you are in serious contention for the position. While you should not take any steps before receiving a tentative offer, this would be the time to consider a plan for transitioning from your current position. While EOIR is happy to work with a selectee to make that transition smooth, the time between the offer and the time to enter on duty is always faster than people think. Once a tentative offer is extended, typical time to entrance on duty is no more than 60-90 days so planning ahead to transfer clients or cases will help make that time less stressful for you.

Training.

EOIR has a robust training program for new Immigration Judges. The program begins upon your entrance on duty and is multiple weeks long. It includes learning opportunities with mentors, in a classroom, and on-the-job training as you begin adjudicating. Our trainers are sitting adjudicators and other immigration law experts who will help you prepare to begin this exciting new phase of your career.

Reapply.

If you are not selected, apply again. The competition for these positions can be fierce, especially in popular locations, but there is ongoing need for great candidates. The next time, you might make the cut.

Information about the job.

- *Support staff.* While subject to change, Immigration Judges have a team of support staff that assist them. Legal assistants are tasked with intake of filings and e-filings, legal administrative specialists are tasked with assisting Judges in-court and managing their calendars, and judicial law clerks/attorney advisors assist the Immigration Judges with written decisions and legal research. Also, court administrators serve as overall docket managers at each court.
- *Travel.* It is possible that some travel will be required, but at this time, EOIR is relying upon video teleconferencing. At present, most Immigration Judges do not travel outside training opportunities.
- *Schedule flexibilities.* Most courts operate from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Immigration Judges' schedules track the hours of their specific court. Scheduling flexibilities vary by court. In most cases, a compressed work schedule is available after an Immigration Judge has completed two years on the bench.

QUESTIONS?



If you have questions regarding the Immigration Judge position, please reach out and ask, we are happy to help! Please reach out to the contact person listed in the advertisement to which you are applying.