



# Vermont Association of County Judges

## 2016-2018 OFFICERS

Karen Bradley, President, Lamoille County  
Jack Anderson, Treasurer, Windsor County

Bob Johnson, Vice-President, Franklin County  
Joyce McKeeman, Secretary, Orange County

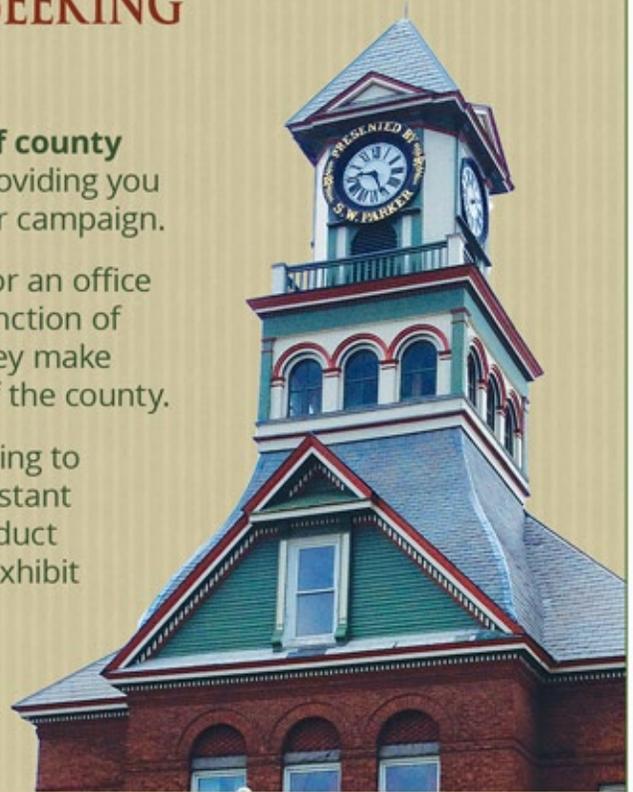
## INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES SEEKING THE OFFICE OF ASSISTANT JUDGE

**Thank you for your interest in running for the office of county Assistant Judge.** The Association of Assistant Judges is providing you with important information that will be helpful during your campaign.

It is common for candidates to assume they are running for an office that is akin to a town selectboard position. Indeed, one function of Assistant Judges is to be the executives of their county: they make budgets, set spending priorities and supervise the work of the county.

However, you might not fully realize that you are also seeking to become an elected member of the Vermont Judiciary. Assistant Judges are held to the same high standards of judicial conduct as their appointed Superior Court colleagues. They must exhibit integrity, honesty and judicial temperament so that the public has utmost confidence in the judges they elect to this unique office.

Refer to information about the Code of Judicial Conduct on the back.



## YOUR DUTIES WILL VARY BY COUNTY

*Your administrative duties* include overseeing county employees, buildings and the budget.

*Your duties as a Judicial Officer* include serving on Family and Civil court proceedings.

In some counties, serving in their judicial capacity is a five-day-a-week job. In other counties, the number of days in court will be fewer. Your administrative work may differ depending on whether your county owns and maintains a county courthouse.

Please contact your local Assistant Judges to determine the number of hours you will be expected to work in your county.

If you have any questions about the office of Assistant Judge or wish to learn more please visit our website: [vtassistantjudges.com](http://vtassistantjudges.com)

## THE CODE OF JUDICIAL CONDUCT

You probably don't realize that upon announcing your candidacy for office you are subject to the Code of Judicial Conduct. The Code applies to all sitting judges and to candidates for judicial office.

*You can find a link to the Code of Judicial Conduct on our website: [vtassistantjudges.com](http://vtassistantjudges.com).*

Here are some of the most important aspects of the Judicial Code that apply to candidates for elected judicial office, which includes both Assistant Judges and Probate Judges.

- 1. You are now limited in the extent to which you can participate in partisan political activities.** If you have been active in your town, county or state political parties, you may need to resign from a position you hold. For example, you can no longer remain a town chair of your political party. Furthermore, you will not be able to take part in many political activities, such as endorsing other candidates during election years. Canon 5 of the Code deals with political activity. Specifically Canon 5 (A) sets forth the limitations that all judges face in participating in partisan politics. Please access the Code online and read all of Canon 5 to understand how this could apply to you.
- 2. The only other elective office you may hold is Town Moderator.** Canon 5 (A)(3)(a) states that a candidate for office must resign from any elective office other than Town Moderator. For example, if you are a Justice of the Peace in your town, you will have to resign now that you are a candidate for an elected judicial office.
- 3. You may not solicit either funds or letters of support on your own behalf.** Canon 5 (C) governs the political conduct of candidates for Assistant Judge. Most importantly, Canon 5 (C) (3) requires that a candidate MAY NOT solicit funds themselves but does allow you to establish a campaign committee which may solicit funds and letters of support on your behalf. Again, please access the Code and read the section in its entirety to ensure that you are conducting your campaign appropriately.
- 4. You are now subject to discipline by the Judicial Conduct Board.** Canon 5 (D) states that a successful candidate, whether or not an incumbent, or an unsuccessful candidate who is an incumbent, is subject to judicial discipline for conduct in the course of seeking appointment or election that violates the provisions of Sections 5A-C; an unsuccessful candidate who is a lawyer is subject to lawyer discipline for campaign conduct that that violates the Vermont Code of Professional Responsibility. A lawyer who is a candidate for judicial office is subject to Disciplinary Rule 8- 103 of the Vermont Code of Professional Responsibility.

These are only a few of the restrictions that you are subject to. Most importantly, you need to be mindful that your public behavior is now subject to a code of conduct and that you must uphold the dignity of judicial office even before you are elected.

Additionally, in the past year it was decided that Assistant Judges are now going to be subject to financial disclosures—as are all other members of the judiciary. This will apply to you if you are elected.

### Consequences for Violating the Code of Conduct

Violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct may result in serious consequences. A case decided in 2017 resulted in barring a former Assistant Judge from holding judicial office for life. None of this person's conduct had to do with behavior on the bench or in his role as the county executive. However, this case is a warning that Assistant Judges are subject to scrutiny in all our affairs and the Code of Judicial Conduct applies even before you are elected.