



Judicial Council of California

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M E M O R A N D U M

Date

January 27, 2025

Action Requested

Please Review

To

Tribal Leaders

Deadline

March 17, 2025

From

Hon. Abby Abinanti, Cochair
Tribal Court–State Court Forum
Chief Judge of the Yurok Tribal Court

Contact

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Hon. Joyce D. Hinrichs, Cochair
Tribal Court–State Court Forum
Judge of the Superior Court of California,
County of Humboldt (Ret.)

Subject

Tribal Court–State Court Forum Vacancies

As cochairs of the [Tribal Court–State Court Forum](#) (Forum), we are writing to notify you of upcoming tribal court judge vacancies on the Forum and describe the selection and appointment process for tribal court judges.

Established in May 2010, the Forum is a coalition of tribal court and state court leaders who come together as equal partners to address areas of mutual concern. In October 2013, the Judicial Council adopted [rule 10.60](#) of the California Rules of Court establishing the Forum as a formal advisory committee. In adopting this rule, the council added a comment acknowledging that tribes are sovereign and citing statutory and case law recognizing tribes as distinct, independent political nations that retain inherent authority to establish their own form of government, including tribal justice systems.

Under rule 10.60, the Forum’s composition must have an equal or a close-to-equal number of judges or justices from tribal courts and state courts. Forum members are generally appointed for two or three-year terms, with a goal of having approximately one third of our members’

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terms expire each year. This year there are six tribal court judge position vacancies to be filled starting September 2025. Five of these positions will be for a three-year term and one will be for two years.

If your tribe has a tribal court, and there is not already a judge from your court serving on the forum or you believe that judge's term on the forum is expiring, we invite you to submit the name of one of your tribal court judges to serve on the forum by completing the form at this link, <https://www.courts.ca.gov/forum.htm> or by completing the attached form and returning it to us along with the nominee's CV or biography.

Should we receive more nominations than vacancies available, then consistent with rule 10.60(d), the forum cochairs will confer and decide which tribal court judges should be appointed. Their decision will be based on the diverse background and experience of the tribal court judges whose names are submitted, as well as the geographic location of the current membership.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either one of us or Ms. Ann Gilmour, Forum staff at 415-865-4207 or ann.gilmour@jud.ca.gov. We look forward to our collaboration with your court either through your tribe's participation on the Forum or through our many [Forum projects](#).

AA/JH/AG/am