



Vacancy Announcement United States District Court Western District of Missouri

Position: Pro Se/Death Penalty Law Clerk
Position Number: PSDPLC – 060124
Location: Kansas City, Missouri

Salary Range: JSP 11/01-14/10 (\$73,690 – \$161,349)
(Salary based on qualifications, legal experience, bar admission, and/or current grade)

Opening Date: June 4, 2024
Closing Date: June 28, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. CST

NOTE: This position is funded through December 31, 2025. Continuation beyond this date is based on additional funding and case filings.

Court Overview

The United States Courts for the Western District of Missouri was established in the year 1822. The Western District of Missouri has approximately 280 total employees (judges and staff) and is a fully consolidated court which includes the District and Bankruptcy Courts and Probation and Pretrial Services Office. The Western District is divided into five divisions: Western (Kansas City), Central (Jefferson City), Southern (Springfield), Southwestern (Joplin), and the St. Joseph division. The primary office is in Kansas City with two divisional offices located in Jefferson City and Springfield.

Position Overview

The Court is currently seeking a Pro Se/Death Penalty Law Clerk (staff attorney) to handle pro se prisoner cases and death penalty cases. Applicants from other Districts within the Judiciary that are willing to relocate are welcome to apply, and all applicants should visit www.mow.uscourts.gov for general information about the court. This is a full-time position. All applicants must possess prior experience handling prisoner litigation.

The successful candidate will team with other staff attorneys to manage the court's prisoner pro se docket, providing legal research, and drafting orders and recommendations for the district judges on all pro se prisoner complaints and filings. Prisoner Pro Se (PPS) staff attorneys screen all prisoner submissions, handling cases from inception through discovery, dispositive motions, and orders on the merits. If a case will proceed to trial, it is then typically forwarded to chambers law clerks.

The primary types of cases handled by the PPS Office are habeas corpus petitions filed pursuant to Sections 2254, 2255 and 2241, and civil rights complaints filed pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983 and 28 U.S.C. § 1331. The Office also handles any type of civil case a pro se prisoner files, including diversity cases, FOIA, FTCA, mandamus and Rule 60(b) motions.

Primary Duties

Duties of the Pro Se/Death Penalty Law Clerk include but are not limited to the following:

- Provide legal advice and assistance to the Court in connection with unrepresented prisoner petitions and complaints as well as represented death penalty litigation.

- Perform substantive screening after filing of all pro se prisoner petitions and motions, including state habeas corpus petitions, motions to vacate sentence, and civil rights complaints.
- Perform research, as required, to assist the Court in preparing opinions.
- Draft appropriate recommendations and orders for the district judges.
- Review all complaints, petitions, and pleadings that have been filed in assigned cases to determine issues involved and basis for relief.
- Maintain liaison between the Court and pro se litigants (as well as family and other representatives) regarding the handling and progress of cases.
- Correspond with other officials, such as U.S. Attorneys, as required.
- Evaluate present procedures to determine new innovations for increasing efficiencies in handling complaints, petitions, and pleadings.
- Review the docket of pending prisoner and death penalty litigation to assure the proper progress of such cases and advise the Court of those cases where action by the Court is appropriate.
- Compile statistics and prepare periodic reports, as required, which reflect the status and flow of cases.
- Identify problem areas, make recommendations, and offer solutions, as required by the Court, Administrative Office, and other officials.
- Keep abreast of changes in the law to aid the Court in adjusting to new legislation in the pro se prisoner and death penalty areas.
- Provide general information, guidance, and advice to judges, chambers staff and the Court Executive regarding pro se prisoner and death penalty cases.
- Work with the Information Technology (IT) department to utilize technology to improve PPS case processing and to further the mission of the Office.
- Advise appropriate personnel on the status of cases.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Qualifications

- A Juris Doctorate degree from a law school of recognized standing and current bar membership in good standing. (Applicants with less than three years of post-graduate work experience should have graduated in the top quarter of their class. Law review membership is not required but highly desirable).
- Prior work experience involving prisoner habeas or civil rights litigation is required. Prior work experience within the federal court system or directly with pro se litigants is highly desirable.
- Ability to analyze complex legal issues and to comprehend a wide range of legal concepts, principles, and practices as they relate to pro se/death penalty litigation.
- Outstanding legal research/writing skills and the ability to perform legal research accurately and expeditiously.
- Ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and informatively, both orally and in writing.
- Experience reviewing documents and extracting data
- Proficiency in the use of computers and applicable software applications, particularly Microsoft Office applications (Word, PowerPoint, and Excel), legal research databases and the CM/ECF database.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to manage priorities with limited supervision.
- Ability to communicate effectively with others, both orally and in writing.
- Ability to prioritize work to meet deadlines, maintain confidentiality, and interact tactfully with litigants, attorneys, and co-workers.
- Ability to understand statistical data, and to perform data analysis using various evaluation methodologies and tools.
- High ethical standards and a positive work attitude.

Benefits

The following benefits are available for this position:

- 11 Paid Holidays each calendar year
- Annual and Sick Leave
 - 13 days of paid annual leave (for up to three years of federal service)
 - 20 days of paid annual leave (from 3-14 years of federal service)
 - 26 days of paid annual leave (15 or more years of federal service)
 - 13 days of paid sick leave (unlimited accumulation)
- Insurance plans: Health, Life, Dental, Vision, Long-Term Care and Long-Term Disability
- Flexible Spending Accounts (Health Care and Dependent Care Reimbursement Accounts)
- Retirement System
- Thrift Savings Plan participation (with up to 5% employer matching contributions)

All judiciary positions are subject to mandatory electronic funds transfer (direct deposit) of salary payments.

Application Procedures

Qualified applicants **must** submit one PDF file containing **all** the following to be considered:

- A cover letter;
- A detailed resume;
- Contact information for three **professional** references;
- A legal writing sample; and
- A completed application for Judicial Branch Federal Employment (Form AO78) with exact dates of employment and salary history.

Link to Form AO78: <http://www.uscourts.gov/forms/AO078.pdf>

Submit application packet to: Kathy Popejoy, Human Resources at kathy_popejoy@mow.uscourts.gov

Miscellaneous Information

Only qualified applicants who submit all the items listed above will be considered for this position. Only those candidates selected for an interview will be contacted. The court is not authorized to reimburse expenses to travel for interviews or for relocation. The court reserves the right to modify the conditions of this vacancy announcement without prior notice. The Western District of Missouri is an equal opportunity employer and values diversity in the workplace.

Conditions of Employment

- Applicants who are non-United States citizens must meet the [Citizenship Requirements for Employment in the Judiciary](#). Only qualified applicants will be considered for this position. All application information is subject to verification.
- As a condition of employment, the selectee must undergo an FBI background check. Employment will be considered provisional until the FBI background check is completed.
- Court employees must adhere to all Judicial Conference regulations, must follow the policies outlined in the [Guide to Judicial Policy](#), and are bound by the ethical standards established by the chief judge of the court and the [Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees](#). The United States District and Bankruptcy Courts are part of the federal judiciary.
- Although positions in the federal judiciary are comparable to civil service in salary, leave accrual and benefits, this position is an Excepted Appointment and considered an "at-will" employment opportunity serving at the pleasure of the court and, as a rule, can be terminated by the court with or without cause. Successful employment with the U.S. Courts is based on acceptable performance.