

CHAPTER 46

NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF JUDGES

Referred to in [§39A.1](#), [39A.2](#), [39A.4](#), [39A.6](#), [47.1](#), [260C.15](#), [260C.39](#), [275.35](#), [277.3](#), [296.4](#), [298.18](#), [357J.16](#), [360.1](#), [372.2](#), [376.1](#), [602.4101](#), [602.5102](#), [602.6201](#), [602.11111](#)

46.1	Appointment of state judicial nominating commissioners.	46.10	Nomination of elective nominating commissioners.
46.2	Election of state judicial nominating commissioners.	46.11	Certification of commissioners.
46.2A	Special appointment or election of state judicial nominating commission members.	46.12	Notification of vacancy and resignation.
46.3	Appointment of district judicial nominating commissioners.	46.13	Notice of meetings.
46.4	Election of district judicial nominating commissioners.	46.14	Nomination.
46.5	Vacancies.	46.14A	Court of appeals — nominees.
46.5A	Judicial nominating commission expenses.	46.15	Appointments to be from nominees.
46.6	Equal seniority.	46.16	Terms of judges.
46.7	Eligibility to vote.	46.17	Time of judicial election.
46.8	Certified list.	46.18	Eligibility of voters.
46.9	Conduct of elections.	46.19	Election registers.
46.9A	Notice preceding nomination of elective nominating commissioners.	46.20	Declaration of candidacy.
		46.21	Conduct of elections.
		46.22	Voting.
		46.23	General election and absent voter laws.
		46.24	Results of election.
		46.25	Eligible elector defined.

46.1 Appointment of state judicial nominating commissioners.

The governor shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the senate, one eligible elector of each congressional district to the state judicial nominating commission for a six-year term beginning and ending as provided in [section 69.19](#). The terms of no more than three nor less than two of the members shall expire within the same two-year period. No more than a simple majority of the members appointed shall be of the same gender.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.1]

[87 Acts, ch 218, §1](#)

Referred to in [§46.2A](#)
Confirmation, see [§2.32](#)

46.2 Election of state judicial nominating commissioners.

The resident members of the bar of each congressional district shall elect one eligible elector of the district to the state judicial nominating commission for a six-year term beginning July 1. The terms of no more than three nor less than two of the members shall expire within the same two-year period, the expiration dates being governed by the expiration dates of the terms of the original appointive members. The members of the bar of the respective congressional districts shall in January, immediately preceding the expiration of the term of a member of the commission, elect a successor for a like term. For the first elective term open on or after July 1, 1987, in the odd-numbered districts the elected member shall be a woman and in the even-numbered districts the elected member shall be a man. Thereafter, the districts shall alternate between women and men elected members.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.2]

[87 Acts, ch 218, §2](#)

Referred to in [§46.2A](#)

46.2A Special appointment or election of state judicial nominating commission members.

1. As used in [this section](#), “congressional district” means those districts established following the 2010 federal decennial census and described in [chapter 40](#).

2. Notwithstanding [sections 46.1](#) and [46.2](#), the terms of the appointed and elected members of the state judicial nominating commission serving on December 31, 2012, shall expire on that date.

3. The terms of newly appointed and elected members of the state judicial nominating commission shall commence on January 1, 2013, based upon the number of congressional districts as enacted pursuant to [chapter 42](#).

4. The initial term of the appointed members shall be as follows:

a. In the congressional district described as the first district, there shall be one member with a term of two years and one member with a term of six years.

b. In the congressional district described as the second district, there shall be one member with a term of two years and one member with a term of four years.

c. In the congressional district described as the third district, there shall be one member with a term of four years and one member with a term of six years.

d. In the congressional district described as the fourth district, there shall be one member with a term of two years and one member with a term of four years.

5. The initial term of the elected members shall be as follows:

a. In the congressional district described as the first district, there shall be one member with a term of two years and one member with a term of four years.

b. In the congressional district described as the second district, there shall be one member with a term of four years and one member with a term of six years.

c. In the congressional district described as the third district, there shall be one member with a term of two years and one member with a term of six years.

d. In the congressional district described as the fourth district, there shall be one member with a term of four years and one member with a term of six years.

6. The appointed and elected members from each congressional district shall be gender balanced as provided in [section 69.16A](#).

7. After the initial term is served pursuant to [this section](#), the appointed members shall be appointed to six-year terms as provided in [section 46.1](#), and the elected members shall be elected to six-year terms as provided in [section 46.2](#).

[2008 Acts, ch 1049, §1](#); [2009 Acts, ch 133, §13](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1021, §37](#)

46.3 Appointment of district judicial nominating commissioners.

1. The governor shall appoint five eligible electors of each judicial election district to the district judicial nominating commission.

2. The appointments made by the governor shall be to staggered terms of six years each and shall be made in the month of January for terms commencing February 1 of even-numbered years.

3. No more than a simple majority of the commissioners appointed shall be of the same gender.

4. Beginning with terms commencing February 1, 2012, there shall not be more than one appointed commissioner from a county within a judicial election district unless each county within the judicial election district has an appointed or elected commissioner or the number of appointed commissioners exceeds the number of counties within the judicial election district. [This subsection](#) shall not be used to remove an appointed commissioner from office prior to the expiration of the commissioner's term.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.3]

[87 Acts, ch 218, §3](#); [2011 Acts, ch 78, §1](#)

Referred to in [§602.11111](#)

46.4 Election of district judicial nominating commissioners.

1. The resident members of the bar of each judicial election district shall elect five eligible electors of the district to the district judicial nominating commission. Commissioners shall be elected to staggered terms of six years each. The elections shall be held in the month of January for terms commencing February 1 of even-numbered years.

2. For terms commencing February 1, 1988, and every six years thereafter, one elected commissioner in each district shall be a woman and one shall be a man. For terms commencing February 1, 1990, and every six years thereafter, one elected commissioner in each district shall be a woman and one shall be a man. For the term commencing February 1, 1992, in the odd-numbered districts the elected commissioner shall be a woman and

in the even-numbered districts the elected commissioner shall be a man. For the terms commencing every six years thereafter, the districts shall alternate between women and men elected commissioners.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.4]

[87 Acts, ch 218, §4](#)

46.5 Vacancies.

1. When a vacancy occurs in the office of appointive judicial nominating commissioner, the chairperson of the particular commission shall promptly notify the governor in writing of such fact. Vacancies in the office of appointive judicial nominating commissioner shall be filled by appointment by the governor, consistent with eligibility requirements. The term of state judicial nominating commissioners so appointed shall commence upon their appointment pending confirmation by the senate at the then session of the general assembly or at its next session if it is not then in session. The term of district judicial nominating commissioners so appointed shall commence upon their appointment.

2. Except where the term has less than ninety days remaining, vacancies in the office of elective member of the state judicial nominating commission shall be filled consistent with eligibility requirements by a special election within the congressional district where the vacancy occurs, such election to be conducted as provided in [sections 46.9 and 46.10](#).

3. Vacancies in the office of elective judicial nominating commissioner of district judicial nominating commissions shall be filled consistent with eligibility requirements and by majority vote of the authorized number of elective members of the particular commission, at a meeting of such members called in the manner provided in [section 46.13](#). The term of judicial nominating commissioners so chosen shall commence upon their selection.

4. If a vacancy occurs in the office of chairperson of a judicial nominating commission, or in the absence of the chairperson, the members of the particular commission shall elect a temporary chairperson from their own number.

5. When a vacancy in an office of an elective judicial nominating commissioner occurs, the state court administrator shall cause to be mailed to each member of the bar whose name appears on the certified list prepared pursuant to [section 46.8](#) for the district or districts affected, a notice stating the existence of the vacancy, the requirements for eligibility, and the manner in which the vacancy will be filled. Other items may be included in the same mailing if they are on sheets separate from the notice. The election of a district judicial nominating commissioner or the close of nominations for a state judicial nominating commissioner shall not occur until thirty days after the mailing of the notice.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.5]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10017, 10201; 87 Acts, ch 218, §5; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §164, 171](#)

Referred to in [§602.11111](#)

Confirmation, see [§2.32](#)

46.5A Judicial nominating commission expenses.

Members of the state judicial nominating commission and the district judicial nominating commissions are entitled to be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as commissioners for each day spent attending commission meetings or training sessions called by the chairperson. Expenses shall be paid from funds appropriated to the judicial branch for this purpose.

[88 Acts, ch 1094, §1; 98 Acts, ch 1047, §13](#)

46.6 Equal seniority.

If the judges of longest service, other than the chief justice, of the supreme court or of the district court in a district are of equal service, the eldest of such judges shall be chairperson of the particular judicial nominating commission.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.6]

[2016 Acts, ch 1011, §10](#)

46.7 Eligibility to vote.

To be eligible to vote in elections of judicial nominating commissioners, a member of the bar must be eligible to practice and must be a resident of the state of Iowa and of the appropriate congressional district or judicial election district as shown by the member's most recent filing with the supreme court for the purposes of showing compliance with the court's continuing legal education requirements, or for members of the bar eligible to practice who are not required to file such compliance, any paper on file by July 1 with the state court administrator, for the purpose of establishing eligibility to vote under [this section](#), which the court determines to show the requisite residency requirements. A judge who has been admitted to the bar of the state of Iowa shall be considered a member of the bar.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.7]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10018, 10201; 86 Acts, ch 1119, §1; 92 Acts, ch 1116, §1; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §165, 171](#)

Referred to in [§602.6504](#)

46.8 Certified list.

Each year the state court administrator shall certify a list of the names, addresses, and years of admission of members of the bar who are eligible to vote for state and district judicial nominating commissioners.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.8]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10019, 10201; 86 Acts, ch 1119, §2; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §166, 171](#)

Referred to in [§46.5, 46.9A, 602.6504, 602.8102\(14\)](#)

46.9 Conduct of elections.

When an election of judicial nominating commissioners is to be held, the state court administrator shall administer the voting. The state court administrator may administer the voting by electronic notification and voting or by paper ballot mailed to each eligible attorney. The state court administrator shall mail paper ballots to eligible attorneys or electronically notify and enable eligible attorneys to vote. The elector receiving the most votes shall be elected. When more than one commissioner is to be elected, the electors receiving the most votes shall be elected, in the same number as the offices to be filled.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.9]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10020, 10201; 2000 Acts, ch 1058, §58; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §167, 171](#)

Referred to in [§46.5](#)

46.9A Notice preceding nomination of elective nominating commissioners.

At least sixty days prior to the expiration of the term of an elective state or district judicial nominating commissioner, the state court administrator shall mail paper ballots to eligible attorneys or electronically notify and enable eligible attorneys to vote. An eligible attorney is a member of the bar whose name appears on the certified list prepared pursuant to [section 46.8](#) for the district or districts affected.

[87 Acts, ch 218, §6; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §168, 171](#)

46.10 Nomination of elective nominating commissioners.

1. In order to have an eligible elector's name printed on the ballot for state or district judicial nominating commissioner, the eligible elector must file in the office of the state court administrator at least thirty days prior to expiration of the period within which the election must be held a nominating petition signed by at least fifty resident members of the bar of the congressional district in case of a candidate for state judicial nominating commissioner, or at least ten resident members of the bar of the judicial district in case of a candidate for district judicial nominating commissioner. No member of the bar may sign more nominating petitions for state or district judicial nominating commissioner than there are such commissioners to be elected.

2. Ballots or electronic voting forms for state and district judicial nominating

commissioners shall contain blank lines equal to the number of such commissioners to be elected, where names may be written in.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.10]

[2009 Acts, ch 179, §169, 171](#)

Referred to in [§46.5](#)

46.11 Certification of commissioners.

The governor and the state court administrator respectively shall promptly certify the names and addresses of appointive and elective judicial nominating commissioners to the state commissioner of elections and the chairperson of the respective nominating commissions.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.11]

[2009 Acts, ch 179, §170, 171](#)

46.12 Notification of vacancy and resignation.

1. When a vacancy occurs or will occur within one hundred twenty days in the supreme court, the court of appeals, or district court, the state commissioner of elections shall forthwith so notify the chairperson of the proper judicial nominating commission. The chairperson shall call a meeting of the commission within ten days after such notice; if the chairperson fails to do so, the chief justice shall call such meeting.

2. When a judge of the supreme court, court of appeals, or district court resigns, the judge shall submit a copy of the resignation to the state commissioner of elections at the time the judge submits the resignation to the governor; and when a judge of the supreme court, court of appeals, or district court dies, the clerk of district court of the county of the judge's residence shall in writing forthwith notify the state commissioner of elections of such fact.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.12]

[89 Acts, ch 18, §1; 2003 Acts, ch 151, §1, 64](#)

Referred to in [§602.2301, 602.8102\(4\)](#)

46.13 Notice of meetings.

The chairperson of each judicial nominating commission shall give the members of the commission at least five days' written notice by mail of the time and place of every meeting, except as to members who execute written waivers of notice at or before the meeting or unless the commission at its next previous meeting designated the time and place of the meeting.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.13]

Referred to in [§46.5](#)

46.14 Nomination.

1. Each judicial nominating commission shall carefully consider the individuals available for judge, and within sixty days after receiving notice of a vacancy shall certify to the governor and the chief justice the proper number of nominees, in alphabetical order. Such nominees shall be chosen by the affirmative vote of a majority of the full statutory number of commissioners upon the basis of their qualifications and without regard to political affiliation. Nominees shall be members of the bar of Iowa, shall be residents of the state or district of the court to which they are nominated, and shall be of such age that they will be able to serve an initial and one regular term of office to which they are nominated before reaching the age of seventy-two years. Nominees for district judge shall file a certified application form, to be provided by the supreme court, with the chairperson of the district judicial nominating commission. Absence of a commissioner or vacancy upon the commission shall not invalidate a nomination. The chairperson of the commission shall promptly certify the names of the nominees, in alphabetical order, to the governor and the chief justice.

2. A commissioner shall not be eligible for nomination by the commission during the term for which the commissioner was elected or appointed to that commission. A commissioner shall not be eligible to vote for the nomination of a family member, current law partner, or current business partner. For purposes of [this subsection](#), "family member" means a spouse, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, father, mother,

stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother, or half sister.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.14]

[89 Acts, ch 212, §1](#); [2003 Acts, ch 151, §2](#)

Vacancies in courts and number of nominees, Iowa Constitution, Art. V, §15

46.14A Court of appeals — nominees.

Vacancies in the court of appeals shall be filled by appointment by the governor from a list of nominees submitted by the state judicial nominating commission. Three nominees shall be submitted for each vacancy. Nominees to the court of appeals shall have the qualifications prescribed for nominees to the supreme court.

[2007 Acts, ch 86, §1](#)

46.15 Appointments to be from nominees.

1. All appointments to the supreme court and court of appeals shall be made from the nominees of the state judicial nominating commission, and all appointments to the district court shall be made from the nominees of the district judicial nominating commission.

2. If the governor fails to make an appointment within thirty days after a list of nominees has been submitted, the appointment shall be made from the list of nominees by the chief justice of the supreme court.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.15]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10021, 10201](#); [2007 Acts, ch 86, §2](#)

Vacancies in courts and number of nominees, Iowa Constitution, Art. V, §15

46.16 Terms of judges.

1. Subject to [sections 602.1610](#) and [602.1612](#) and to removal for cause:

a. The initial term of office of judges of the supreme court, court of appeals, and district court shall be for one year after appointment and until January 1 following the next judicial election after expiration of such year; and

b. The regular term of office of judges of the supreme court retained at a judicial election shall be eight years, and of judges of the court of appeals and district court so retained shall be six years, from the expiration of their initial or previous regular term as the case may be.

2. Subject to removal for cause, the initial term of office of a district associate judge shall be for one year after appointment and until January 1 following the next judicial election after expiration of such year, and the regular term of office of a district associate judge retained at a judicial election shall be six years from the expiration of the initial or previous regular term, as the case may be.

3. Subject to removal for cause, the initial term of office of a full-time associate juvenile judge or a full-time associate probate judge shall be for one year after appointment and until January 1 following the next judicial election after expiration of such year, and the regular term of office of a full-time associate juvenile judge or a full-time associate probate judge retained at a judicial election shall be six years from the expiration of the initial or previous regular term, as the case may be.

[C66, 71, §46.16; C73, 75, 77, 79, §46.16, 602.29; C81, §46.16]

[83 Acts, ch 186, §10022, 10201](#); [99 Acts, ch 93, §1, 15](#); [2003 Acts, ch 151, §3, 65](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1031, §22](#)

Referred to in [§602.6305](#), [602.7103C](#), [633.20C](#)

46.17 Time of judicial election.

Judicial elections shall be held at the time of the general election.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.17]

Referred to in [§602.1216](#), [602.6305](#), [602.7103C](#), [633.20C](#)

46.18 Eligibility of voters.

Electors entitled to vote at the general election shall be entitled to vote at the judicial election. All voting procedures provided by [chapter 53](#) for absent voting by armed forces in general elections shall be applicable to judicial elections.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.18]
Referred to in [§602.1216](#), [602.6305](#), [602.7103C](#), [633.20C](#)

46.19 Election registers.

The election registers used for the general election shall also constitute the election registers for the judicial election.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.19]
Referred to in [§602.1216](#), [602.6305](#), [602.7103C](#), [633.20C](#)

46.20 Declaration of candidacy.

At least one hundred four days before the judicial election preceding expiration of the initial or regular term of office, a judge of the supreme court, court of appeals, or district court including district associate judges, full-time associate juvenile judges, or full-time associate probate judges, or a clerk of the district court who is required to stand for retention under [section 602.1216](#) may file a declaration of candidacy with the state commissioner of elections to stand for retention or rejection at that election. If a judge or clerk fails to file the declaration, the office shall be vacant at the end of the term. District associate judges, full-time associate juvenile judges, and full-time associate probate judges filing the declaration shall stand for retention in the judicial election district of their residence.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.20]
[83 Acts, ch 186, §10023, 10201](#); [89 Acts, ch 136, §29](#); [99 Acts, ch 93, §2](#)
Referred to in [§602.1216](#), [602.6305](#), [602.7103C](#), [633.20C](#)

46.21 Conduct of elections.

At least sixty-four days before each judicial election, the state commissioner of elections shall certify to the county commissioner of elections of each county a list of the judges of the supreme court, court of appeals, and district court including district associate judges, full-time associate juvenile judges, and full-time associate probate judges, and clerks of the district court to be voted on in each county at that election. The county commissioner of elections shall place the names upon the ballot in the order in which they appear in the certificate. The state commissioner of elections shall rotate the names in the certificate by county. The names of all judges and clerks to be voted on shall be placed upon one ballot, which shall be in substantially the following form:

STATE OF IOWA
JUDICIAL BALLOT
(Date)

VOTE ON ALL NAMES BY PLACING AN X IN THE APPROPRIATE
BOX AFTER EACH NAME.

SUPREME COURT

Shall the following judges of the supreme court be retained in
office?

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

COURT OF APPEALS

Shall the following judges of the court of appeals be retained in
office?

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

DISTRICT COURT

Shall the following judge, associate judge, associate juvenile judge, or associate probate judge of the district court be retained in office?

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

Shall the following clerk of the district court be retained in office?

CANDIDATE'S NAME YES NO

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.21]

83 Acts, ch 186, §10024, 10201; 89 Acts, ch 136, §30; 99 Acts, ch 93, §3; 2004 Acts, ch 1083, §2, 37; 2017 Acts, ch 110, §74

Referred to in §602.1216, 602.6305, 602.7103C, 633.20C

Voting mark generally, see §49.92

46.22 Voting.

Voting at judicial elections shall be by separate paper ballot or optical scan ballot in the space provided for public measures. If separate paper ballots are used, the election judges shall offer a ballot to each voter. If optical scan ballots are used, either a separate ballot or a distinct heading may be used to distinguish the judicial ballot. Separate ballot boxes for the general election ballots and the judicial election ballots are not required. The general election ballot and the judicial election ballot may be voted in the same voting booth.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.22]

90 Acts, ch 1238, §10; 2007 Acts, ch 190, §18; 2009 Acts, ch 57, §11

Referred to in §602.1216, 602.6305, 602.7103C, 633.20C

46.23 General election and absent voter laws.

So far as applicable, general election and absent voter laws shall apply to judicial elections. An application for an absent voter ballot for a general election shall also constitute an application for an absent voter ballot for a judicial election to be held at the same time, and the ballots shall be mailed or delivered to the voter together. The sealed envelope transmitted by the absent voter to the county commissioner of elections containing the absent voter general election ballot may also contain the judicial election ballot.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.23]

Referred to in §602.1216, 602.6305, 602.7103C, 633.20C

46.24 Results of election.

1. A judge of the supreme court, court of appeals, or district court including a district associate judge, full-time associate juvenile judge, or full-time associate probate judge, or a clerk of the district court must receive more affirmative than negative votes to be retained in office. When the poll is closed, the election judges shall publicly canvass the vote forthwith. The board of supervisors shall canvass the returns on the Monday or Tuesday after the election, and shall promptly certify the number of affirmative and negative votes on each judge or clerk to the state commissioner of elections.

2. The state board of canvassers shall, at the time of canvassing the vote cast at a general election, open and canvass all of the returns for the judicial election. Each judge of the supreme court, court of appeals, or district court including a district associate judge, full-time associate juvenile judge, or full-time associate probate judge, or a clerk of the district court who has received more affirmative than negative votes shall receive from the state board of canvassers an appropriate certificate so stating.

[C66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §46.24]

83 Acts, ch 186, §10025, 10201; 90 Acts, ch 1238, §11; 99 Acts, ch 93, §4; 2000 Acts, ch 1154, §8

Referred to in §331.383, 602.1216, 602.6305, 602.7103C, 633.20C

46.25 Eligible elector defined.

As used in [this chapter](#), the term “eligible elector” has the meaning assigned that term by [section 39.3](#).

[C75, 77, 79, 81, §46.25]