

# Recommendation for New U.S. Circuit and District Court Judgeships by the Judicial Conference of the United States (119<sup>th</sup> Congress)

April 8, 2025

Congress determines through legislative action both the size and structure of the federal judiciary, including the number of U.S. circuit and district court judgeships. As of this writing, at least six legislative proposals have been introduced during the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress to provide for the authorization of new circuit and district judgeships. The [JUDGES Act of 2025](#), for example, was ordered to be reported by the House Judiciary Committee on March 5, 2025, and would authorize, over a staggered number of years, 65 new permanent district court judgeships and 1 temporary district court judgeship. Additionally, Congress approved a [similar bill during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress](#) to authorize additional judgeships (the bill was [vetoed](#) by former President Biden on December 23, 2024).

The [Judicial Conference of the United States](#), the policymaking body of the federal courts, also makes a biennial recommendation to Congress that identifies any circuit and district courts that, according to the conference, require new judgeships to more effectively administer civil and criminal justice in the federal system. This Insight provides information related to the conference's [most recent recommendation](#) released on [March 11, 2025](#).

## U.S. Circuit Court Judgeships

The conference's recommendation requests two new permanent judgeships for the [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit](#) ([comprised of](#) California, eight other western states, and two U.S. territories). This would increase the number of judgeships from 29 to 31. The Ninth Circuit is the country's most populous circuit, with a [population of approximately 68.5 million](#).

## U.S. District Court Judgeships

As shown by **Figure 1**, the conference also recommends that Congress authorize 69 new permanent judgeships for 25 U.S. district courts. Of the 25 district courts included in the recommendation, the

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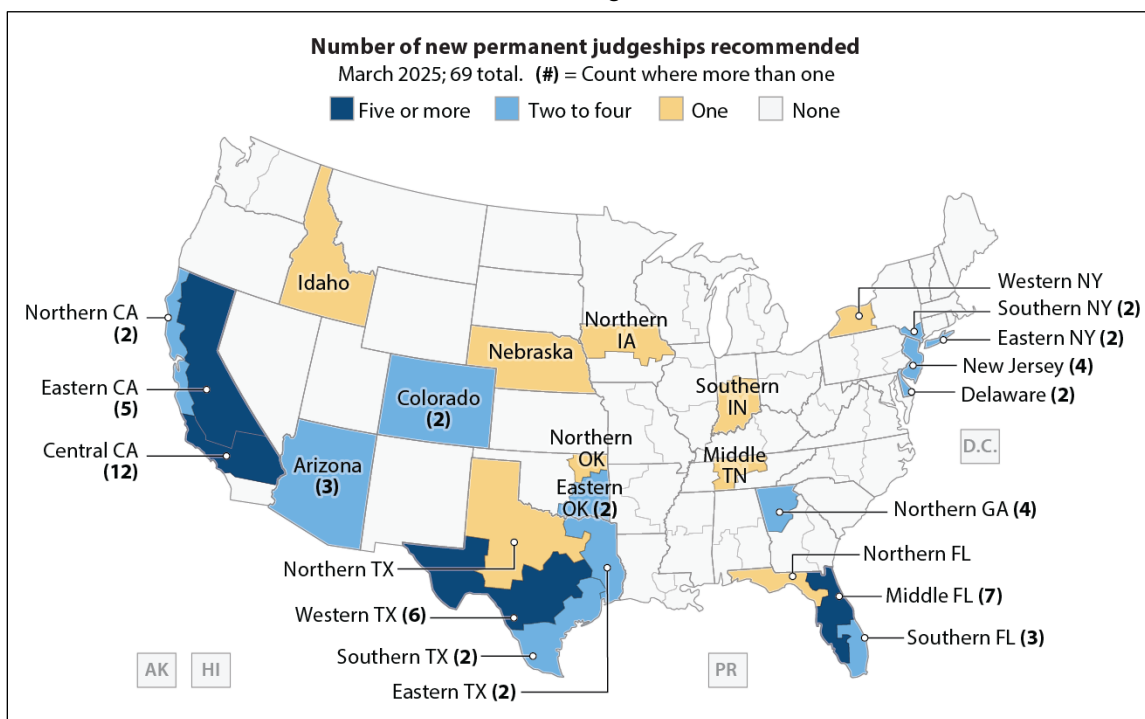
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conference recommends five or more new judgeships for 4 (16%) of the 25 courts, two to four new judgeships for 12 (48%) of the courts, and one new judgeship for 9 (36%) of the courts. Additionally, of the 25 courts, 24 were included in the Judicial Conference's recommendation from 2023 (the [Middle District of Tennessee](#) is the new addition to the 2025 recommendation).

The 25 district courts are located across 15 states, with 46 (67%) of the 69 new judgeships recommended for district courts located in California, Florida, New York, and Texas. The greatest number of new judgeships, 12, is recommended for the [Central District of California](#), comprised of Los Angeles County and six other counties. The district is the most populous in the country, with a population of approximately 19.2 million (and represents approximately 28% of the Ninth Circuit's total population).

**Figure 1. Judgeship Recommendations by the Judicial Conference**

119<sup>th</sup> Congress



**Source:** Map by Congressional Research Service based on information provided by the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts.

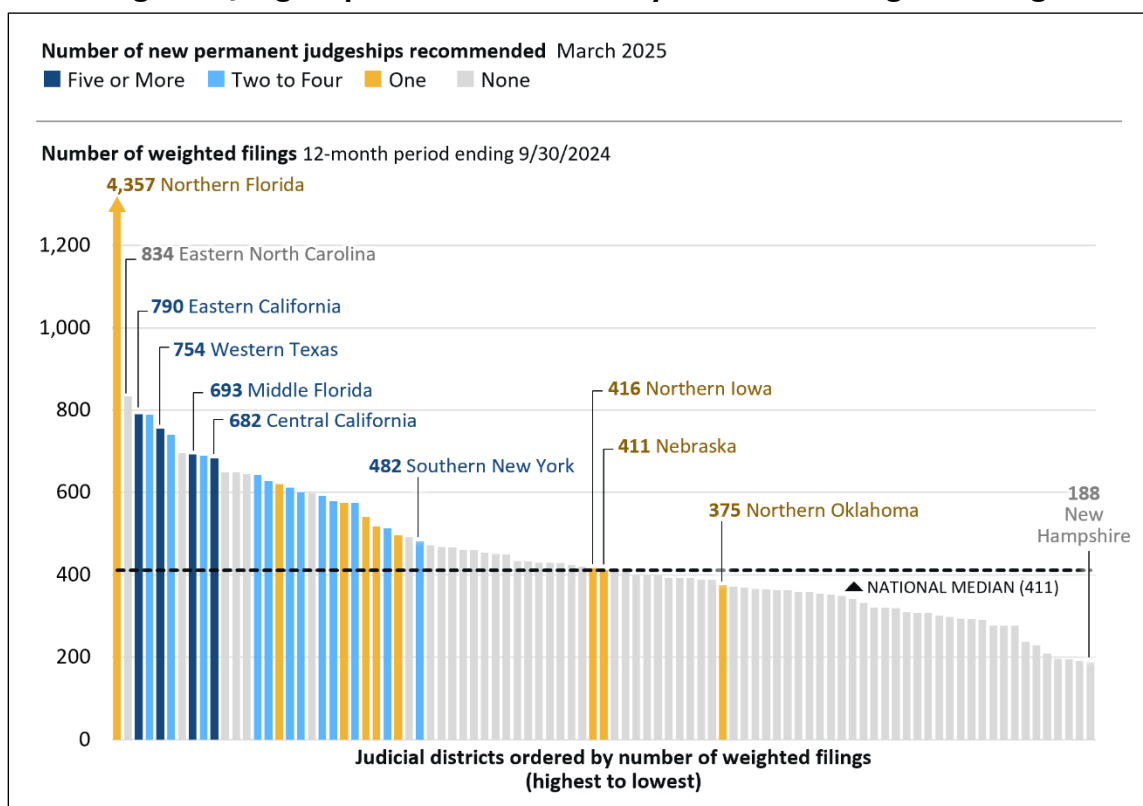
The [JUDGES Act of 2025](#), as ordered to be reported by the House Judiciary Committee on March 5, would authorize at least one new judgeship for 24 of the 25 district courts included in the Judicial Conference's subsequent March 11 recommendation (with the exception of the Middle District of Tennessee) and authorize additional judgeships for the [Southern District of California](#).

The Judicial Conference's recommendation as to which district courts need new judgeships is based, in part, upon a comparison across district courts of the number of "weighted filings" per authorized judgeship. Weighted filings "[account for the different amounts of time district judges require to resolve various types of civil and criminal actions.](#)" Specifically, the weighted filings statistic takes into account the relative complexity of cases and the expected amount of time required for the disposition of cases for any given court. For example, during FY2024 the [U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware](#) had the 15<sup>th</sup>-highest number of weighted filings per authorized judgeship, in large part, because [cases involving](#)

intellectual property rights, which can be complex and time-consuming, comprised 29% of civil case filings for the court (compared to 5% of all such filings nationally).

As shown by **Figure 2**, the median number of weighted filings across all district courts for the 12-month period ending September 30, 2024, was 411. The greatest number of weighted filings per authorized judgeship was for the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](#) (4,357), while the fewest number of weighted filings was for the [U.S. District Court for the District of New Hampshire](#) (188). The relatively high number of weighted filings for the Northern District of Florida is attributable to [multidistrict litigation](#) involving [products liability](#) claims.

**Figure 2. Judgeship Recommendations by Number of Weighted Filings**



**Source:** Figure by the Congressional Research Service based on information provided by the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts.

In general, the conference typically [requires a court to have over 430 weighted filings per judgeship](#) in order for it to recommend at least one additional judgeship for the court (although other factors can be considered). Of the 25 district courts included in the conference's recommendation, 22 (88%) had over 430 weighted filings per judgeship during the 12-month period ending September 30, 2024.

Of the 39 district courts with over 430 weighted filings per authorized judgeship, the conference recommended additional permanent judgeships for 22 (56%). The five district courts with the highest numbers of weighted filings per authorized judgeship and for which the conference did not recommend at least one new permanent judgeship are the [Eastern District of North Carolina](#) (834 weighted filings), [Southern District of Ohio](#) (695), [Southern District of Illinois](#) (649), [District of South Carolina](#) (649), and [District of Minnesota](#) (645).

Of the 52 courts with 430 or fewer weighted filings per judgeship, the conference recommended additional judgeships for 3 (6%): the [Northern District of Iowa](#) (416 weighted filings), [District of Nebraska](#) (411), and [Northern District of Oklahoma](#) (375).

While the number of weighted filings per judgeship is the primary factor in the Judicial Conference's evaluation of the need for additional judgeships, the conference's recommendations are not based solely upon this particular statistic. The conference considers other factors, such as the availability of [senior](#), [visiting](#), and [magistrate judges](#) to assist in handling a district court's caseload or unusual caseload activity that temporarily increases or decreases a court's workload.

## Author Information

Barry J. McMillion  
Analyst in American National Government

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