



Report Highlights

Louisiana Judiciary: Comparison with Other States

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Why We Conducted This Review

This informational report provides the results of a comparison of selected aspects of the judiciary in Louisiana, including number of judges, method of selection, and compensation, to courts in other states and territories. Pursuant to a legislative request, we researched and compared courts in Louisiana to other states and territories.

What We Found

- **The number of judges in each state is determined either in constitution or statute. As of June 2023, Louisiana has 219 general jurisdiction trial/district court judges, 53 intermediate appellate judges, and 7 supreme court justices.** While other states have more judges, Louisiana has more judges per capita than states with similar populations; however, this analysis does not factor in the caseloads of courts in each state. The exhibit below compares the number of judges per capita in Louisiana to five states with similar populations.

Number of Judges per Capita in States with Similar Populations* • As of July 1, 2022

State	Population	Number of General Jurisdiction Trial Judges	Number of Immediate Appellate Court Judges	Number of Court of Last Resort Justices	Total Judges	Judges per 100,000 Capita
South Carolina	5,282,634	49	9	5	63	1.2
Alabama	5,074,296	146	10	9	165	3.3
Louisiana	4,590,241	219	53	7	279	6.1
Kentucky	4,512,310	92	14	7	113	2.5
Oregon	4,240,137	177	13	7	197	4.6
Oklahoma	4,019,800	152	11	14	177	4.4

* Similar populations refers to the total number of individuals within the state and does not consider the demographic composition (e.g. age, race, level of education, median income, etc.) of the population.

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division; NCSC; LASC; and state judicial websites.

- **The majority of judges in other states are elected, similar to Louisiana, for both their initial and additional terms.** The governor, legislature, judiciary, or president appoints judges in other states.
- **Judicial salaries in Louisiana, similar to 23 other states, are set by a judicial compensation commission.** In Louisiana, state law establishes a Judicial Compensation Commission that submits recommendations concerning judges' salaries to the legislature every two years. In addition, Louisiana, along with 28 other states, constitutionally protects judicial salaries from any reductions.

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What We Found (Cont.)

- Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas are the only three states that provide supplemental pay to judges. As of September 2023, Louisiana district judges, appellate judges, and supreme court justices receive approximately \$950 per month in extra pay from the Judges' Supplemental Compensation Fund. According to Act 63 of the 1985 Regular Legislative Session, the legislature intended the Fund to be used for salary supplements to judges and commissioners and to cover related increased retirement costs to the state.
- As of January 1, 2023, Louisiana salaries ranked 27th of 55 states and territories for general jurisdiction trial court judges, 17th of 51 for the adjusted cost-of-living salaries of general jurisdiction trial court judges, 27th of 42 for intermediate appellate court judges, and 28th of 55 for court of last resort associate justices. The exhibit below summarizes the mean, median, minimum, and maximum salaries for all states in each of the three court systems, as well as Louisiana's salary and rank as of January 1, 2023.

Judicial Salaries at a Glance • As of January 1, 2023						
Court Level	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	LA Salary	LA Rank
General Jurisdiction Trial	\$177,247	\$168,949	\$132,300	\$232,600	\$168,949	27 of 55
Adjusted General Jurisdiction Trial*	166,415	163,909	124,554	223,212	173,795	17 of 51**
Intermediate Appellate	189,429	188,505	142,500	264,542	175,797	27 of 42***
Court of Last Resort - Associate Justice	197,396	189,198	149,600	282,177	187,914	28 of 55
Court of Last Resort - Chief Justice	201,762	197,823	125,000	295,908	197,250****	N/A*****

*With cost-of-living adjustment using the C2ER cost-of-living index
 **C2ER does not provide cost of living index for U.S. territories.
 ***Nine states and three territories do not have intermediate appellate courts and North Dakota only has a temporary intermediate appellate court.
 ****Effective December 1, 2022, the Chief Justice's salary includes a base salary of \$186,450 and an annual supplement of \$10,800.
 *****NCSC does not share Chief Justice salary data with the public.
 Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using NCSC data and information provided by LASC.

- During fiscal year 2022, approximately \$3.6 million (1.5%) of total Louisiana district court and courts of appeal expenditures of \$241.3 million were reimbursements for travel and support expenses. States use various methods to reimburse judges for meals, lodging, and mileage, including set per diems, actual cost reimbursement, or federal rate requirements. Louisiana has an \$118 per diem for meals and reimbursement varies depending on several factors for lodging.
- All 33 of the states reviewed, similar to Louisiana, offer defined benefit retirement plans to judges. Five (15.2%) of the 33 states also offer defined contribution plans and four (12.1%) offer combination defined benefit and defined contribution plans.