

The logo for the Washoe County Bar Association (WCBA) consists of the letters "WCBA" in a white, serif font, centered within a dark green square.

Washoe County Bar Association

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WASHOE COUNTY BAR RELEASES JUDICIAL SURVEY RESULTS

RENO, NEVADA — The Washoe County Bar Association (WCBA) reports the statistical results of the 2010 performance evaluation of Washoe County Judges, Commissioners and Masters and Nevada Supreme Court Justices. The confidential evaluation was completed by 217 attorneys who practice regularly in front of the judges in Washoe County.

Washoe County Bar Association conducts this survey to provide the public with information on the judge's abilities gathered from the lawyers who practice in the courts and to offer constructive feedback to the judges. "The WCBA judicial survey is a reliable source of information for citizens on their courts and judges" said Elliott Sattler, president of the Washoe County Bar Association. "All but three of the judges and court masters received cumulative scores above a 'satisfactory' rating (3.0). That demonstrates that our citizens are getting good justice from the judges who serve them."

Public and private attorneys who practice regularly in Washoe Courts are eligible to participate, regardless of membership in the Washoe County Bar Association. WCBA sent just under 1200 survey instruction letters, but since many lawyers do not practice in front of judges on a regular basis, WCBA estimates that only a portion of those attorneys are eligible to complete the survey. The survey was conducted online using the firm ElectionsOnline, a Virginia-based firm that conducts elections and judicial surveys for associations, including many Bar Associations.

Twenty-three specific questions were answered on such topics such as: knowledge and application of substantive law; ability to perceive factual/legal issues; management and control of trials and hearings; behavior free from bias regarding gender; efficiency in docket management; and promptness in rendering decisions, among others. The question regarding sentencing was not included for Supreme Court Justices, Family Court Judges, Commissioners and Court Masters. The final question is a yes or no question: "Should this judge be retained?" In each category, attorneys were asked to rate each of the judges on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very poor," 3 being "satisfactory," and 5 being "excellent." To assure the anonymity of the respondents, we do not report scores for judges who received ten or fewer

responses. The average scores are as follows (District Court judges are sorted by General Jurisdiction and Family Court.)

	Performance Scores Average	Should this judge be retained? Yes
General Jurisdiction		
Dept. 1 Judge Janet Berry	3.30	56%
Dept. 3 Judge Jerry Polaha	3.71	80%
Dept. 4 Judge Connie Steinheimer	3.25	54%
Dept. 6 Judge Brent Adams	4.47	90%
Dept. 7 Judge Patrick Flanagan	4.20	88%
Dept. 8 Judge Steven Kosach	3.25	56%
Dept. 9 Judge Robert Perry	4.17	84%
Dept. 10 Judge Steve Elliott	3.65	73%
Family Court		
Dept. 2 Judge David Hardy	4.61	96%
Dept. 5 Judge Deborah Schumacher	4.45	97%
Dept. 11 Judge Chuck Weller	2.98	40%
Dept. 12 Judge Frances Doherty	3.52	72%
Dept. 13 Judge Bridget Robb Peck	4.00	77%
Dept. 14 Judge Linda Gardner	4.09	88%
Justices of the Peace		
Dept. 1 Judge Patricia Lynch, Reno	2.90	41%
Dept. 2 Judge Pete Sferrazza, Reno	2.88	38%
Dept. 3 Judge Jack Schroeder, Reno	3.23	61%
Dept. 4 Judge Harold Albright, Reno	3.92	83%
Dept. 5 Judge Barbara Finley, Reno	3.75	76%
Dept. 1 Judge Susan Deriso, Sparks	3.62	77%
Dept. 2 Judge Kevin Higgins, Sparks	3.18	49%
Judge E. Alan Tiras, Incline Village	3.82	95%
Judge Terry Graham, Wadsworth	3.69	80%
Municipal Court Judges		
Dept. 1 Judge Jay Dilworth, Reno	3.35	59%
Dept. 2 Judge Paul Hickman, Reno	4.12	90%
Dept. 3 Judge James Van Winkle, Reno	3.76	69%
Dept. 4 Judge Kenneth Howard, Reno	3.88	74%
Dept. 1 Judge Barbara McCarthy, Sparks	3.88	82%
Dept. 2 Judge James Spoo, Sparks	3.88	73%

Court Commissioners and Masters

Discovery Commissioner Wesley Ayres	4.60	94%
Probate Commissioner Linda Bowman	4.14	82%
Juvenile Div. Court Master Janet Schmuck	3.83	70%
Juvenile Div. Master Buffy Dreiling	4.21	86%
Domestic Violence Master Sue Edmonson	3.92	76%
Family Div. Master Tamatha Schreinert (ten or fewer responses, not reported)		
UIFSA Court Master Eagan Walker	4.27	86%
Family Div. Master Kathleen Noneman	3.69	71%
Family Div. Master Nancy Moss Ghush (ten or fewer responses, not reported)		
Family Div. Master Annabelle Hall (ten or fewer responses, not reported)		

Only the retention question was asked for the seven Nevada Supreme Court Justices. Those scores are reported below:

Justices of the Nevada Supreme Court	Should this Justice be Retained
	Yes
Justice Michael Cherry	65%
Justice Michael Douglas	76%
Justice Mark Gibbons	80%
Justice James Hardesty	89%
Justice Ron Parraguirre	79%
Justice Kristina Pickering	56%
Justice Nancy Saitta	49%

Statistical analysis of the survey was compiled and reported by the CPAs of Meridian Business Advisors. All confidential comments were sealed until the analysis and compilation process was completed. The results were distributed to the judges just before release to the public. Meridian Business Advisors has generously donated professional time to compile and report the judicial survey results.

All survey results dating from 1994 are available at the WCBA website, www.wcbar.org.

For the third time, WCBA is including statistical information from the Washoe County Office of Court Administration, reporting the number of cases and the number of preemptory challenges a judge received in the past two fiscal years. A preemptory challenge is a procedure where a legal party can pay a \$300 fee to remove a judge from hearing a case. Once the fee is paid, the case is randomly reassigned to another judge. The procedure is not available in criminal cases.

Preemptory challenges and number of cases heard for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 fiscal years (June to June) for General Jurisdiction Judges and Family Court Judges are as follows as provided by the Office of the Court Administration.

	Unaudited Assigned Cases Handled July 08 – June 10	Preemptions FY 08/09	Preemptions FY 09/10
General Jurisdiction Judges			
D1 - JANET BERRY	3,140	10	10
D3 - JEROME POLAHA	2,766	7	4
D4 - CONNIE STEINHEIMER	2,558	5	11
D6 - BRENT ADAMS	3,685	0	3
D7 - PATRICK FLANAGAN	2,907	7	15
D8 - STEVEN KOSACH	3,218	5	14
D9 - ROBERT PERRY	3,123	9	3
D10 - STEVEN ELLIOTT	3,065	10	15
Family Court			
D2 - DAVID HARDY	3,237	0	0
D5 - DEBORAH SCHUMACHER	2,605	4	2
D11 - CHUCK WELLER	4,551	31	25
D12 - FRANCES DOHERTY	2,625	11	16
D13 - BRIDGET PECK	2,494	1	7
D14 - LINDA GARDNER	2,511	2	2

The Washoe County Bar Association was incorporated in 1905 to serve the legal community in Reno, Nevada. The mission of the bar is to further professionalism, ethics and service in the practice of law. One hundred years later, WCBA offers services to members and the public that reflect that mission. WCBA has 1300 members in northern Nevada.

For more information about Washoe County Bar Association, please contact Christine Cendagorta, executive director, at 775-786-4494 or visit the website at www.wcbar.org.

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