

**UNIFIED JUDICIAL SYSTEM
POSITION DESCRIPTION**

LEGAL SECRETARY

CLASS CODE: 99-21-08

POSITION PURPOSE

Provides administrative assistance to the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court and their law clerks by ensuring their written works are correctly formatted and distributed; that they are notified of required timelines; and records are filed, updated, and available when needed; and by managing daily office procedures to facilitate efficient flow of work.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURE

This position is distinguished by the efficiency by which assigned tasks are accomplished; and by the reliability of the incumbent in maintaining confidentiality and the best interests of the Court.

MAJOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Note: The duties listed are typical examples of work performed by positions in this job classification. Not all duties are included, nor is the list exclusive.

1. Proofreads legal opinions and special writings submitted by the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and their law clerks to verify correctness of formatting and citations.
 - a. Checks formatting and citation references and makes suggestions to the authors for corrections.
 - b. Submits corrected writings to the Supreme Court Clerk's office to be filed and included on the private access drive; and distributes copies to other members of the Court, law clerks, Chief of Legal Research, staff attorneys, and legal secretaries.
 - c. Prepares cover sheets for published opinions, and proofreads opinions in publishers' advance sheets before publication to hard-bound books.
 - d. Corrects errors noted while proofreading and contacts all publishing entities.
 - e. Keeps a log of the Chief Justice's and Associate Justices' writings, in opinion form as well as participation in other opinions in the form of special writings.
 - f. Makes copies of records that may be needed from an appeal as an attachment to the opinion.

2. Provides administrative support to facilitate the appeals process for the Chief Justice and Associate Justices.
 - a. Maintains a record of votes in all written opinions.
 - b. Alerts the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of due dates on writings and voting.
 - c. Files extensions as requested.
 - d. Prepares disqualification orders when the Chief Justice or Associate Justices disqualify themselves from participation in appeals before the Court.
 - e. Prepares labels and sets up file folders for ready briefs for the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and law clerks; and mails ready briefs weekly to outlying offices.

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- f. Maintains a filing system for briefs and documents currently on appeal.
 - g. Keeps functional files for orders and judgments, closed files, finals, agenda items, teleconference minutes, and travel vouchers.
3. Checks the proposed calendar for errors and disqualification statements in preparation for the monthly case draw.
 - a. Checks out records and places them in the law clerks' offices for cases drawn, and mails them to outlying offices.
 - b. Scans and emails legal documents to outlying offices.
 - c. Notifies the Chief Justice and Associate Justices as to which cases were drawn for them.
 - d. Prepares retention letters for the Chief Justice's and Associate Justices' signatures, and submits same to the Secretary of State's office.
 4. Provides administrative assistance to the Chief Justice and Associate Justices when Court is held out of town by organizing memorandums and notes to ensure they have documentation needed; and assists the executive assistant with daily work as needed.
 5. Facilitates procedures for interviewing and hiring law clerks to ensure communication among those involved and adherence to timelines.
 - a. Answers inquiries pertaining to application for clerkship, and explains the Court's requirements, i.e., five sets of each: cover letter, resume, grade transcript, and a current writing sample.
 - b. Maintains the job description for law clerks and submits the description, with the Chief Justice's approval, to the law school each year.
 - c. Acknowledges receipt of correspondence.
 - d. Maintains files for the Chief Justice and Associate Justices until they request them for reviewing purposes.
 - e. Forwards copies of the Chief Justice's acknowledgement letters and law clerk applications to Associate Justices.
 - f. Reminds the Supreme Court Clerk to set aside time on the Court's administrative agenda for clerkship interviews.
 - g. Prepares confirmation letters for the Chief Justice's and Associate Justices' chosen candidates.
 - h. Acknowledges all applicants, interviewed and not interviewed.
 - i. Makes the law clerk handbook available during law clerk orientation.
 - j. Prepares letters of recommendation upon request.
 - k. Maintains a list of all law clerks that have been with the Supreme Court since 1967.
 6. Performs highly responsible secretarial work involving sensitive and complex work methods to support the procedures of the Court.
 - a. Updates the legal secretarial handbook routinely.
 - b. Assists legal staff in updates of the South Dakota Supreme Court Citation System Manual.
 - c. Updates the South Dakota Supreme Court law clerk handbook on a regular basis.
 - i. Maintains notes with suggested changes.
 - ii. Confers with law clerks and legal secretaries to develop suggested changes.
 - iii. Submits suggested changes to the Chief Justice and Associate Justices for approval.
 - iv. incorporates approved changes into the handbook.
 - d. Synthesizes the court calendar into one page for convenience in access.

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- e. Proofreads abuse and neglect memorandums, and submits originals and five copies to the Clerk's office for inclusion in administrative teleconferences.
7. Performs support duties for the 6th law clerk position.
 - a. Proofreads pre-argument memorandums, conference opinions, special writings, vote sheets, and assignment sheets.
 - b. Makes copies of opinions to be handed down and provides same to the Supreme Court Clerk's office for distribution.
 - c. Provides copies of final opinions and briefs to University of South Dakota School of Law Serials Librarian.
 - d. Combines final opinions into PDF format, forwards to test site for weekly publication, reviews test site to ensure accuracy, and authorizes approval of publication to the South Dakota State website.
 - e. Provides final opinions to retired Justices and Circuit and Magistrate Judges.
 - f. Keeps records of opinions handed down each week.
 - g. Maintains files for secretary briefs, mails ready briefs to Associate Justices and law clerks stationed out of town.
8. Performs other work as assigned.

SUPERVISORY FUNCTIONS

This position manages administrative duties to support the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court and their law clerks.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS REQUIRE

Sitting for extended periods of time; operating office machines such as a computer, telephone, copier, etc.; using hands for repetitive movement including grasping, turning, and typing; lifting as much as 30 pounds; walking up and down stairs; and attendance in accordance with rules and policies. The incumbent is also required to work effectively with coworkers and the public, maintain confidentiality, manage stress, meet deadlines, and understand and communicate (verbally and in writing) procedures and practices.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Challenges include remaining current on updated computer systems and administrative procedures. This is difficult because computer systems are updated often and changes must be evaluated to determine their effect on the work at hand; and changes in procedures often have unseen impacts so awareness and communication are important. Incumbents are further challenged to proofread written work of several individuals. This is difficult because of personal writing styles and preferences in handling their written materials; and making sure that work has been proofread and prepared for distribution and is an error-free product.

Problems encountered include prioritizing reviews of large submissions of written work daily; ensuring paper work is distributed to all the right people; reminding the USD Law School to forward clerkship applications in a timely manner; and organizing and prioritizing daily administrative tasks.

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DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Decisions include screening telephone calls for the Chief Justice and Associate Justices, whether format of written work is correct, whether references to citations should be questioned, corrections to be made prior to publication of written works, responses to inquiries regarding applications for clerkship, and priority of assigned daily work.

Decisions referred include all decisions regarding legal matters and alterations to written work; appropriate salaries to be listed on job descriptions for law clerks; and work assignments.

CONTACT WITH OTHERS and PURPOSE

Daily contact with the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and law clerks to provide administrative assistance; and with the Supreme Court Clerk's office regarding appeals, distribution of opinions, mail received from the Chief Justice and Associate Justices, monthly court draws, disqualification orders, etc.; routine contact with the HELP desk staff and other I/T staff to resolve computer issues and post opinions on-line; with Policy and Legal Services to prepare for court locations outside Pierre; with fiscal staff regarding vouchers; with central services for printing and mail services; and with USD School of Law Serials Librarian to send completed cases.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The incumbent works in a typical office environment.

COMPETENCIES/QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- legal terminology;
- procedures and practices of the Court;
- English, grammar, and punctuation;
- alphabetical and numerical sequences as they relate to sorting and filing.

Skill in:

- typing or keyboarding at a highly proficient level;
- proofreading;
- time management;
- prioritizing and organizing tasks.

Ability to:

- learn and proficiently use office machines;
- prioritize time and make sure assigned work is accomplished in the order that is most effective for the Court;
- adjust to ever-changing processes of computer and communication systems;
- maintain confidentiality;
- communicate effectively both orally and in writing with a wide variety of people.

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Education:

Graduation from high school or possession of a GED certificate.

Experience:

Three (3) years of legal secretarial work experience; or an equivalent combination of related education and experience.