

COLORADO SUPREME COURT

Updated August 2018

In FY 2017, 1,285 new cases were filed in the Supreme Court. Of those 1,124 cases were either petitions for certiorari, asking the court to review decisions of the court of appeals, or original proceedings, asking the court to intervene in cases pending in the trial courts. In both types of cases, the court has discretion to choose which ones it will hear. The remainder of the new filings is direct appeals which the Supreme Court must review. Included in this category are attorney discipline cases, water cases, Public Utility Commission cases, prosecutorial appeals from trial court orders suppressing evidence, ballot title matters, and death penalty appeals.

The court hears oral arguments in most of the cases it decides. Arguments are scheduled two or three days each September through June with approximately four to eight cases heard in each session. Unlike the court of appeals, which hears and decides cases in panels of three, all seven Supreme Court justices decide each case unless a justice is disqualified in a particular case. The Supreme Court writes between 75 to 100 opinions per year. Three-fifths are civil cases and two-fifths are criminal. The civil cases are varied and may include any type of case tried in the state courts. Many are matters of first impression which involve issues not previously decided in Colorado.

In addition to work directly connected with deciding cases, each justice participates in two or three committees which address particular matters related to the court system or the administration of the Judicial Branch. Examples include the Supreme Court Attorney Regulation Advisory Committee, Civil Rules Committee, Criminal Rules Committee, Judicial Advisory Council, Fairness Committee, and Probation Advisory Committee. Other duties include serving as ex officio chairs of judicial nominating commissions and speaking to legal and civic groups.

To perform successfully, a justice must be able to organize and comprehend a large and ever-increasing volume of written materials. Screening cases is a time-consuming process, but the heart of the court's work is its opinions. Although each justice has a small staff of three employees, the work of the justice is one of "hands on" personal responsibility and public accountability for each decision made. Each justice authors approximately fourteen majority opinions per year, plus any concurring or dissenting opinions the justice chooses to write.

The goal of each opinion is to clearly and persuasively set forth the law, the facts, and the court's decision in order to provide guidance to the lower courts, lawyers and the public. Excellent research and writing skills, decisiveness, and good judgment are essential qualities for every justice. Because the Supreme Court hears such a variety of cases, each justice must be able to move easily from one area of law to another on a daily basis. Finally, the justice must be able to make decisions collegially and to function effectively within the constraints of court.

For further information, please contact Cheryl Stevens, Clerk of the Supreme Court, 2 East 14th Avenue, Denver, CO 80203; 720-625-5150 or cheryl.stevens@judicial.state.co.us.

Revised: January, 2018

Justices of the Colorado Supreme Court

Nathan B. Coats Chief Justice
Sworn Into Office: May 25, 2000
Appointed Chief
Justice: July 1, 2018
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2023

Monica M. Márquez Justice
Sworn Into Office: December 10, 2010
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2025

Brian D. Boatright Justice
Sworn Into Office: November 1, 2011
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2025

William W. Hood, III Justice
Sworn Into Office: January 13, 2014
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2027

Richard L. Gabriel Justice
Sworn into Office September 1, 2015
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2019

Melissa Hart Justice
Sworn into Office December 20, 2017
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2021

Carlos A. Samour, Jr. Justice
Sworn into Office July 2, 2018
Term Expires: Second Tuesday in January, 2021