



**Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center**  
UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

# **Wyoming State Bar Judicial Performance Assessment, 2024**

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# Wyoming State Bar Judicial Performance Assessment, 2024

By

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# Wyoming State Bar Judicial Performance Assessment, 2024

## 1. Introduction

In the fall of 2023, the Wyoming State Bar commissioned the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming to administer the 2024 Wyoming Judicial Performance Assessment (JPA).

The Wyoming State Bar undertook its first judicial evaluation poll in 1976 and has completed one each election year since. The goals and uses of the Wyoming JPA conform to the American Bar Association (ABA) guidelines and the practices of other Bar associations.

Judicial evaluation polls are used by Bar associations to provide feedback to judicial officials about their performance on the bench and to help the public make more informed judgments in judicial elections.

In the fall of 2023, an Ad hoc committee was formed to review the polls conducted in previous years and suggest changes that would make the results more beneficial to the Wyoming judiciary and the Wyoming public. The committee included representatives of the Wyoming judiciary, attorneys, the State Bar, and the Wyoming public. The committee suggested changes to the survey instrument and the protocols used in previous years.

All attorneys would indicate which judges in Wyoming they had appeared before in the previous two years. For each judge indicated, attorneys would rate the judge's performance on several items. Attorneys would also evaluate Supreme Court Justices based on either an appearance in that court or a review of their written opinions. Attorneys were asked to indicate whether they favor or oppose the respective judge's retention. Finally, attorneys would be asked to include their comments explaining their rating on each group of items.

As in previous years, all written comments are shared with the judge/justice only, but the author of the comments is *not* disclosed.

For 2024, the instrument has been condensed to lower the response burden and encourage participation by more attorneys in the state. Questions regarding the performance of Supreme Court Justices were switched back to the question block used pre-2022 due to committee discussions.

The rating scale was changed in 2022 and was again utilized for the 2024 assessment. Instead of an approve/disapprove scale, a sliding scale of 10 to 100, where 10 to 39 is considered "below adequate," 40-69 is considered "adequate," and 70 to 100 is considered "above adequate," was introduced. This scale would lend itself to reporting the results with less or more granularity, depending on the report's purpose and audience.

As was the case in the past ten iterations, the 2024 JPA was administered as a web-only survey with email invitations sent to all Bar Association members in Wyoming.

The list of attorneys and the judges before whom each attorney had appeared in the past 24 months was provided to WYSAC by the Wyoming Supreme Court Administration.

The poll was launched on June 3, 2024, with an email invitation for participation. Prior to this initial email invitation, Sharon Wilkinson of the Wyoming State Bar emailed all attorneys to inform them of the upcoming survey and explain the importance of the project. Reminder emails were sent roughly every week to all

attorneys who had not yet responded with completed surveys. Three reminder emails were sent to all attorneys who had not yet completed a survey.

The survey closed on July 31, 2024, providing attorneys roughly two months to respond. After closing, the online database was exported into a format suitable for data analysis. A total of 586 attorneys *accessed* the online survey (compared to 673 in 2022). A total of 417 valid completions were obtained before the cut-off date (compared to 418 in 2022). After accounting for bad email addresses in the list, the total number of potentially eligible respondents for the effort was 1642. With 417 completed surveys, the response rate is 25%.

## 2. Results

The following page presents the individual results for all judges. The *judge's version* of this report contains mean scores for each item and information regarding how many times the rating attorneys have appeared before this judge in the previous 24 months. Both of these pieces of information have been suppressed for the public release.

Instructions were provided to all attorneys before each section asking them to rate each item on the following guidance: a sliding scale of 10 to 100, where 10 to 39 is considered "below adequate," 40-69 is considered "adequate," and 70 to 100 is considered "above adequate." For the public, only these aggregate ratings are provided.