VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
Address: Joseph F. Weis Jr. Courthouse
700 Grant Street, Suite 3110
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Website: www.pawd.uscourts.gov

Position:	**Pro Se Law Clerk**
Vacancy Number:	**26-08**
Position Location:	**Johnstown, Pennsylvania**
Grade/Salary:	**JSP Grade 11-14 (depending on qualifications)** Starting salary determined by qualifications, years of legal work experience, bar membership and assigned duty station (See "legal work experience and salary table on page 3 of this Notice).
Telework:	Employees may be approved for occasional telework as outlined in the Court's Telework Policy.
Opening and Closing Dates:	**October 19, 2026 and will remain open until filled. Preference will be given to those applications received by November 9 , 2026. Position available Immediately.**

Overview

Pro Se Law Clerks provide legal advice and assistance to the Court in connection with prisoner petitions and complaints. The Pro Se Law Clerk works primarily on prisoner habeas corpus and civil rights actions, and cases in which a plaintiff applies for in forma pauperis (IFP) status. *This appointment and continued employment are determined on a year to year basis and is subject to funding based upon the court's caseload.* Click here to view a brief video about legal professionals working in the Courts.

Representative Duties

- Performs substantive screening after filing of all prisoner and inmate petitions and motions, including state habeas corpus petitions, motions to vacate sentence, and civil rights complaints.
- Drafts appropriate recommendations and proposed orders for the Court's review.
- Reviews filed complaints, petitions, and pleadings to determine issues involved and basis for relief.
- Performs research, as required, to assist the Court in preparing opinions.
- Maintains liaison between the Court and litigants.
- Evaluates present procedures to determine new innovations for increasing the effectiveness in handling pro se complaints, petitions, and pleadings.
- Reviews the docket of pending prisoner and inmate litigation to assure the proper progress of such cases and advises the Court of those cases where action by the Court is appropriate.
- Compiles statistics and prepares periodic reports, as required, that reflect the status and flow of cases. Identifies problem areas, makes recommendations, and offers solutions, as required by the Court, Administrative Office, and other officials.
- Keeps abreast of changes in the law in the pro se area.
- Provides information, guidance, and advice to the Court and other staff working in the pro se area. Advises appropriate personnel on the status of cases.

- Performs other related duties as assigned.

Qualification Requirements

Must be a law school graduate (or be certified as having completed all law school studies and requirements and merely awaiting conferment of degree) from a law school of recognized standing and have demonstrated one of the following accomplishments or proficiencies:

a) Standing within the upper one-third of the class at a law school that is accredited by the American Bar Association or the Association of American Law Schools;

b) Experience on the editorial board of a law review of such a school;

c) Graduation from such a school with an LLM degree; or

d) Proficiency in legal studies that, in the opinion of the appointing judge, is the equivalent of one of the above. Some examples of criteria that are considered to be acceptable as equivalent include, but are not limited to:

1) Publication of a noteworthy article in a law school student publication or other scholarly publication;

2) Special high-level honors for academic excellence in law school, such as election to the Order of the Coif;

3) Winning of a moot court competition or membership on a moot court team that represents the law school in competition with other law schools;

4) Participation in the legal aid or other law school clinical program sanctioned by the law school;* or

5) Summer experience as a law clerk to a state or local judge or law clerk experience on a continuing basis in a private firm while attending school (i.e., working one's way through college).*

*To receive credit, participation and experience could not have been for academic credit).

Preferred Qualifications

- A background in prisoner habeas corpus and civil rights actions
- Excellent research, writing, and analytical skills
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Ability to prioritize work
- Ability to work both collaboratively and independently, as well as efficiently and effectively, in a high-volume environment
- High ethical standards and a positive work attitude

Legal work experience that will be considered in determining salary is defined as progressively responsible experience in the practice of law, in legal research, legal administration, or equivalent experience received after graduation from law school. Major or substantial legal activities while in military service may be credited, on a month-for-month basis whether before or after graduation, but not to exceed one year if before graduation.

The table below shows the number of years of legal work experience required to qualify for appointment as a pro se law clerk at the applicable JSP grade levels. Please note that appointment to JSP-12 or above requires that the candidate be a member of the bar of a state, territory, or federal court of general jurisdiction.

JSP Grade Level	Years of Legal Work Experience	Bar Membership Required	Salary range based on duty station in Johnstown
11	0	No	$77,211 - $100,380
12	1	Yes	$92,543 - $120,309
13	2	Yes	$110,047 - $143,062
14	3	Yes	$130,042 - $169,060

Benefits

Employees are eligible for a full range of benefits to include retirement, health and life insurance, flexible benefits, long-term care insurance, paid holidays, and annual and sick leave accrual. Click here for additional information. The Court offers Public Transit Subsidy in accordance with local policy and dependent upon availability of funding.

Background Investigation

This position is classified as a sensitive position which requires the selected candidate to submit to a background investigation which will include a criminal history, credit and FBI fingerprint check as a condition of employment with periodic updates. The selected candidate will be hired provisionally pending the successful completion of the required background check and favorable employment suitability determination.

Applicant Information

Employees must adhere to a Code of Conduct. The Court provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities. Veterans' preference is not a factor used in Judicial Branch appointments. Applicants must be U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents seeking U.S. citizenship. Positions with the U.S. Courts are excepted service appointments, which are "at will" and may be terminated with or without cause. Employees are required to use electronic funds transfer for payroll deposit. The court reserves the right to modify the conditions of this job announcement, to withdraw the job announcement, and/or to commence interviews immediately, any of which may occur without prior written or other notice. In the event a position becomes vacant in a similar classification within a reasonable time from the original announcement, the Court may select an appointee from the candidates who responded to the initial announcement without posting the vacancy.

How to Apply

Apply only through the court's online application tracking system which is accessed at the Employment Section (Court Info) of the Western District of Pennsylvania website: Click here. Please submit the following: a cover letter stating the reason for your interest in the position; a resume, including complete employment, educational history, skills, and experience; and a completed Application for Judicial Branch Federal Employment, AO78, which can be downloaded when applying or Click here. Applicants will receive an email confirmation upon receipt. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Only candidates selected for interview will be notified and must travel at their own expense. Relocation expenses will not be reimbursed.

District Overview

The District's jurisdiction encompasses the 25 western counties of Pennsylvania, with courthouses located in Erie, Johnstown and Pittsburgh. The District is comprised of United States District Judges, United States Senior District Judges, United States Magistrate Judges and approximately 145 employees.

The United States District Court, Western District of Pennsylvania, is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity in the workplace.