**Supreme Court**

*Scores taken from YourMissouriJudges.org\**

**Kelly Broniec** – Appointed 9/23 (Parson), 1st year being elected.

*Most Significant Opinion*: Affirmed the SOS Senate redistricting map.

*Prior Service*: Appointed Eastern District Court of Appeals by Governor Parson in 2020. Associate Circuit Judge for Montgomery County for nearly 15 years after her appointment by Governor Matt Blunt in 2006. Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney from 1999 to 2006.

*Governor’s comment*: Strong advocate for families and even more so for Missouri children. Her record shows that she is a fair enforcer of the law, interprets the law as written, and leaves legislating to the General Assembly.

Legal Ability Average Score: 3.6/5

Impartiality Average Score: 3.8/5

Legal Ability: 3.75/5

**Ginger Gooch** – Appointed 10/23 (Parson) 1st year being elected.

*Prior Service*: Missouri Court of Appeals – Southern District 2022, clerked for Hon. Ann K. Covington (1st women ) on the Supreme Court of Missouri, partner with Husch Blackwell LLP in Springfield for ~ 15 years.

*Governor’s comment*: Woman of faith who fought to help give the next generations of Missourians a hand up, works tirelessly to ensure the most qualified people have an opportunity.

Legal Ability Average Score: 4.04/5

Impartiality Average Score: 3.91/5

Legal Ability: 3.91/5

**Final Note:** Both judges voted against keeping Amendment 3 on the ballot. Blue Missouri is actively working to unseat them from the Supreme Court for that opinion.

**Recommendation: Vote FOR both judges.**

\* <https://yourmissourijudges.org/>

**Eastern District Court of Appeals**

**Robert Clayton** – Appointed 2011 (Nixon), chief judge 2013-2014

*Most Significant Opinion:* 2024 James Raymond King v. MO American Water. Ruled in favor of plaintiff, an IL National Guard member deployed to Afghanistan who allegedly got PTSD on duty, for discrimination and hostile work environment due to his disability at the water company.

*Prior Service*: MO House Rep, member Missouri Public Service Commission. Current chair of the Judicial Finance Commission and former acting chair of the Commission on Retirement, Removal & Discipline of Judges.

Legal Ability average score: 4.25/5 **Recommendation: FOR**

Impartiality average score: 4.24/5

Legal Ability: 4.28/5

**Gary Gaertner, Jr.** – Appointed 2009 (Nixon) chief judge 2012-2013

*Prior Service:* assistant circuit attorney for the Circuit Attorney’s Office City of St. Louis, assistant US attorney for the US Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Missouri & chair of that office’s Insurance Fraud Task Force, circuit judge 21st Judicial Circuit, and probate judge 21st Judicial Circuit. Currently chair MO Commission on Retirement, Removal & Discipline of Judges.

Legal Ability average score: 4.36/5

Impartiality average score: 4.33/5

Legal Ability: 4.28/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Rene Hardin-Tammons** – Appointed 2023 (Parson)

*Most Significant Opinion:* Upheld the trial jury’s verdict of murder in the 1st degree calling for a life sentence of Christopher Sokolic who stabbed a man 27 times in front of a witness in May 2020.

*Prior Service:* Judge 21st Judicial Circuit Court, associate circuit judge, a municipal/provisional judge, an assistant StL county counselor, and assistant public defender

*Overview*: faithful interpretation of the law, a drive for excellence, and a tireless work ethic

Legal Ability average score: 3.88/5

Impartiality average score: 3.71/5

Legal Ability: 3.84/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Christian Stevens** – Appointed 2021 (Parson)

*Most Significant Case:* led the investigation of the 2014 officer-involved shooting in Ferguson, received U.S. Attorney's Award for Most Outstanding Trial of the Year in 2014.

*Prior Service*: First Assistant Attorney General to MO AG Eric Schmitt. law clerk to Honorable Pasco M. Bowman II 1998-1999, Chief Judge of the Eighth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals federal prosecutor for 15 years at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Missouri, and member of the Federalist Society

Ability average score: 3.75/5

Impartiality average score: 3.6/5

Legal Ability: 3.5/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Michael Wright** – Appointed 2023 (Parson)

*Prior Service*: associate circuit judge for the 12th Judicial Circuit from 2014-2023, assistant prosecuting attorney for Clay County, elected prosecuting attorney for Warren County.

Of note: when appointed by the Governor there were no exemplary statements made.

*No scores were available on the MO Judges website.*

**Recommendation: FOR**

**21st Circuit Court Judges**

*Significant Cases are those that made it to the media. You may or may not agree with the judge’s opinion on that case, and it is only a single case. Voters will have to decide if that case was important enough to them to singularly influence their vote.*

*Average Lawyer score is a crude statistical calculation of a 19 question survey of lawyers who have been ion the judge’s court about his/her performance. An example of the survey is attached.*

**Heather Cunningham** Appointed 2022

*Significant Case:* Sentenced Kirkwood teacher Christopher Stephens to 5 years probation and prohibition against ever teaching anyone under the age of 18. Though initially charged with grooming then raping students, his case was pleaded down to two counts of endangering the welfare of a child. The judge can only rule on charges brought and she said the victim’s statements did not fall on deaf ears.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.26/5

Average Juror Score: 100% competent

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Bruce Hilton** Appointed 2017

*Significant Case*: Sept 2024 he initially signed off on an agreement filed on behalf of Marellus Williams who was convicted of 1st degree murder for stabbing a victim 43 times in 1998, to accept a no contest plea of guilty in exchange for a life sentence instead of capital punishment. But at the urging of AG Bailey the MO Supreme Court blocked the agreement and ordered Hilton to proceed with an evidentiary hearing after which he ruled that the first-degree murder conviction and death sentence would stand.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.43/50

Average Juror Score: 99.5% competent

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Megan Julian** Appointed 2023

*No significant case found.*

Average Lawyer Score: 4.44/5

Average Juror Score: NA

**Recommendation: FOR**

**John “JB” Lasater** Appointed 2017 (Greitens)

*Significant Case*: Nov 2020 denied a group of restaurants' bid for a temporary restraining order against St. Louis County, which had just banned indoor dining for at least four weeks amid a spike in Covid-19 cases.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.4/5

Average Juror Score: NA

**Recommendation: AGAINST**

**Virginia Lay** Appointed 2021

*Significant Case*: Custody case of the Hagemeir children. Though the father was accused of molesting the children he was given sole custody an a temporary restraining order issued against the mother. Within a week police were called to his residence by the daughter claiming he raped her. The children were removed and placed into social services custody. Judge Lay remanded the children back into dad’s custody. The case stems on the father’s claim of “severe alienation” which is legalese for the mother turning the kids against him. Family court is always difficult because so there is so much emotion in family dynamics. The law really can’t account for that and teasing out the truth from all sides is hard and fraught with hazards. You can read about the case, highlighted by Family Court Watch:Missouri, on the blog below and decide for yourself. Judge Zellweger, who is also up for retention, is mentioned in the blog as well. There was also a report by PJmedia on the case where they interviewed the mom and other people caught up in the court system (see Youtube link) It is notable that Family Court Watch have not cited Lay for any additional cases and this case was shortly after she was appointed to the court. Maybe she learned something from it? You can see that the lawyers and jurors rated her highly.

<https://tinyurl.com/vwxrf5xa> blog

<https://tinyurl.com/mpnpux63> youtube

Average Lawyer Score: 4.4/5

Average Juror Score: 100% competent

**Recommendation:**

**Brian May** Appointed 2016

*Significant Case*: Mark McCostlin v. Monsanto 2023 claimed his non-Hodgkins Lymphoma a result of extended exposure to glysophate. Judge May was asked by the defendant for a directed judgement (no jury) and he ruled in favor of Monsanto. His ruling concluded “insufficiency of expert evidence needed to establish specific causation to make a submissible case.” He told CVN "It was a decision that wasn't made lightly, and took a lot of work, and I don't take joy in doing it, but I have to follow the law as I see the law.”

Average Lawyer Score: 4.32/5

Average Juror Score: 99% competent

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Jeffrey Medler** Appointed 2023

*Significant Case:* 2022 Retired police chief Tim Fitch sued the county to get his pension reinstated after the county’s Retirement Board halted payments when we was elected councilman. Judge Medler was asked to rule whether the law that forbid collecting a pension while an employee of the county applied to elected officials. He ruled it did not and Fitch collected his back payments.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.66/5

Average Juror Score: NA

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Ellen Ribaudo** Appointed 2019

*Significant Case:* 2023 Judge Ribaudo temporarily blocked AG Bailey’s Emergency regulation that would require adults and children to undergo more than a year of therapy and fulfill other requirements before they could receive “gender-affirming treatments” such as puberty blockers, hormones and surgery. The 2 week TRO barred enforcement of the emergency rule until May 15 unless she extended it. Her concern was that people “will be subjected to immediate and irreparable loss, damage or injury if the Attorney General is permitted to enforce the Emergency Rule, and its broad, sweeping provisions were implemented without further fact-finding or evidence.” The emergency rule expired on February 6, 2024 for the legislature to work on a permanent fix.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.42 /5

Average Juror Score: 99% competent

**Recommendation: AGAINST**

**David Vincent III** Appointed 1997

*Significant Case:* 2019 Vincent was the judge for the police officer Wildhaber case against StL County for discrimination in which the plaintiff was ultimately awarded $10.25M. The jury had awarded ~$20M in combined damages, but the judge ordered the two sides to enter into mediation which resulted in a lower settlement, but also in Wildhaber having to pay less to the state from his judgement than was normally required.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.35/5

Average Juror Score: 100% competent

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Stanley J. Wallach** Appointed 2016

*Significant case:* Webster University filed to allow them to use $30M in donor funds, which had restricted for research, scholarships and professorships, to instead improve their liquidity ratio in the face of plummeting fiscal stability. Judge Wallach ultimately ruled in favor of the request, but only after requiring the university to house those funds in a separate account in order to honor the donor’s intent and protect the money from being used for day-to-day operations. The money must be return to restricted status once Webster’s liquidity ratio is back over 100%, after the university has at least one full year of a budget surplus, and as long as the university remains compliant with its loan agreements.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.39/5

Average Juror Score: 99% competent

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Nicole Zellweger** Appointed 2023

*Significant Case*: 2023 *Perotta v. Perotta* divorce and custody proceedings. It is worth reading the St. Louis Record of this case. As mentioned before, Family Court Watch:Missouri is no fan of Zellweger. Perhaps her behavior in this case could be explained by her lack of experience, though she was an Associate Circuit judge for 5 years prior to her appointment. Was it just this case? Did she recognize a manipulative mom? The lawyer’s scores indicate she is a competent judge. He is on the Supreme Court Combatting Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence Commission. Is it better to get the Governor to try again with this appointment?

<https://tinyurl.com/37tfy86m> St. Louis Record

<https://tinyurl.com/4vpwkwhx> PJMedia

Average Lawyer Score: 4.79/5

Average Juror Score: NA

**Recommendation:**

**21st Circuit Associate Judges\***

**Jason Denney** – appointed 2023

Average Lawyer Score: 4.69/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Robert Heggie** – appointed 2015

Average Lawyer Score: 4.38/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Daniel Kertz** appointed 2023

Average Lawyer Score: 4.95/5 *very new, only 5 reviewers*

**Recommendation: FOR**

**John Newsham** – appointed 2018, former long time municipal judge

*Significant Case*: 2019 Michael Loftus struck and killed mother Gretchen Stahlschmidt who was walking through an intersection. He remained at the scene, tried to administer CPR and did not fail a breathalyzer test, though it did register alcohol. The Prosecutor charged him with running a red light. Newsham gave him a fifteen-day sentence (max for the charge), with all fifteen days suspended, and two years of probation. Loftus also had to complete a victim impact panel, perform community service, pay a $300 fine and have an ignition lock device on his car for 2 years to prevent starting if he had been drinking.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.58/5

Average Juror Score: 100%

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Krista Peyton** – appointed 2021

*Significant case*: 2024 Bond Hearing for Johnny Ricks who stomped a 15 year old girl’s head fracturing hers skull outside a McDonalds while on probation for felony charges. Peyton ordered him to remain in jail on $150K bond.

Average Lawyer Score: 4.0/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

**Natalie Warner** – appointed 2023

Average Lawyer Score: 3.98/5

**Recommendation: FOR**

\* *Where no significant case is listed there was nothing in the press about any of that judges cases.*