

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT (VA 24-01)



United States District Court - Middle District of PA **PRO SE LAW CLERK** **Full-Time Position with Benefits** Location to be determined.

Salary: JSP 11-1 (\$73,969) – JSP 14-10 (\$161,961)*
**Salary is based on qualifications, experience, bar membership and duty station. This position is currently funded through 12/31/2025, but may be continued beyond that date contingent upon funding.*

Opening Date: March 8, 2024

Closing Date: March 29, 2024

The United States District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania, is seeking qualified applicants for the position of full-time (40 hours/week) Pro Se Law Clerk. There is a possibility of telework (partial or full-time) for this position with prior approval of the supervising judge or judges. This Vacancy Announcement may be used to fill more than one position.

POSITION OVERVIEW:

The Pro Se Law Clerk provides legal advice and assistance to the Court in connection with *pro se* prisoner petitions and complaints. General responsibilities involve substantive screening of all *pro se* prisoner petitions and motions, including state and federal habeas corpus petitions and civil rights complaints; conducts legal research and analysis; and drafts appropriate opinions and orders for the Court's approval.

The Pro Se Law Clerk will keep abreast of changes in the law to aid the Court in adjusting to new case law and legislation and will review the docket of cases assigned to the incumbent to ensure the proper progress of such cases, tracking motions, briefs, and other filings. This position also involves compiling statistics and preparing periodic reports which reflect the status and flow of cases.

REPRESENTATIVE DUTIES:

The duties and responsibilities of the position include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Reviews all *pro se* prisoner complaints, petitions, and pleadings that have been filed 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. Corresponds with other officials, as required.

REPRESENTATIVE DUTIES (cont'd):

- Reviews the docket of pending *pro se* prisoner litigation to ensure the proper progress of such cases and advises the Court of those cases where action by the Court is appropriate.
- Evaluates present procedures to determine new innovations for increasing the effectiveness in handling *pro se* complaints, petitions, and pleadings.
- 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.
- Provides information, guidance, and advice to judges and other personnel working in the Pro Se area. Advises appropriate personnel on the status of particular cases.
- Performs other duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS:

To qualify for the Pro Se Law Clerk position, an individual 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:

- Standing within the upper third of the law school class from a law school on the approved list of either the American Bar Association or the Association of American Law Schools;
- Experience on the editorial board of a law review of such a school;
- Graduation from such a school with an LLM degree; or
- Proficiency in legal studies that, in the opinion of the appointing Judge, is the equivalent of one of the above. Some examples of acceptable criteria include, but are not limited to:
 - Publication of a noteworthy article in a law school student publication or other scholarly publication;
 - Special high-level honors for academic excellence in law school;
 - Winning of a moot court competition or membership on a moot court team that represents the law school in competition with other law schools; or
 - 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.

The successful candidate must possess superior legal research and writing skills; demonstrate good judgment, poise, and high ethical standards; possess a positive attitude, excellent interpersonal and organizational skills; and ability to work independently and in a team environment.

Skill and proficiency in the use of automated legal research systems, Microsoft Word and Outlook is required. Applicant must possess proficient typing and personal computer skills. Excellent proofreading skills are required.

COURT PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS:

Additional qualifications, experience and skills preferred, but not required, include:

- Experience, by education or practice, in substantive and procedural law concerning federal post-conviction relief and/or *pro se* prisoner law;
- Bar membership, previous clerkship experience and/or post JD experience;
- Experience in the area of *pro se* prisoner and constitutional law;
- Ability to manage time effectively, establish priorities, manage competing demands, and meet strict deadlines in a fast-paced high-volume environment, while working independently under limited guidance and direction;
- Ability to communicate, articulate and relate to coworkers and others with professionalism and integrity; and
- Familiarity with the Federal Rules of Civil and Criminal Procedure and Court procedures.

SALARY:

The salary for this position is based on qualifications, experience, bar membership, duty station and/or prior qualifications under the Court Personnel System and/or the Judiciary Salary Plan. The position has promotion potential to a JSP 14, without further competition, based on performance and at the discretion of the Chief Judge.

BENEFITS:

This is a full-time position which is eligible for the Federal Judiciary's comprehensive benefits package, including paid annual and sick leave, health and life insurance, dental and vision insurance, retirement plan, Thrift Savings Plan (matching, Traditional/tax-deferred) and/or Roth Thrift Savings Plan), flexible spending accounts for health and dependent care, long-term care insurance, parking subsidy program (contingent on budgetary funding), employee assistance program, transportation subsidy program, commuter benefit program, and eleven (11) paid Federal holidays per calendar year.

Additional information about the Federal Judiciary's benefits can be found at

www.uscourts.gov/careers/benefits.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT:

- Successful candidate must be a United States citizen or eligible to work in the United States;
- The successful candidate is hired provisionally, pending the results of a sensitive FBI Background Check and favorable employment suitability determination;
- The Court provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities. If you require a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application process, please notify the District Court's Human Resources Office at (570) 207-5670. The decision on granting a reasonable accommodation is made on a case-by-case basis;
- Successful candidate must comply with Court confidentiality requirements, including handling confidential information in a variety of texts;
- Travel for the interview and/or relocation expenses are not authorized for reimbursement;
- This position may require working beyond normal business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) to meet the demands of the Court;

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT (cont'd):

- Employees are required to use electronic fund transfer (EFT) for payroll purposes (Direct Deposit); and
- The selectee for this position is subject to a criminal record check and satisfactory adjudication by the employing office to be eligible for employment. Due to the sensitivity level of this position, candidates may be asked about their criminal history prior to receiving a tentative offer of employment. Candidates completing the Application for Employment, AO-78, must complete questions 18-20 regarding their criminal history. Criminal history is not in itself disqualifying. All available information, past and present, favorable, and unfavorable, about the reliability and trustworthiness of an individual will be considered when making an employment suitability determination. Providing false and/or misleading information may be grounds for removal from the application and selection process, as well as disciplinary action if discovered after an individual's date of hire.

The uscourts.gov/careers web page provides a means for candidates to report alleged violations of the Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act. This is the only applicant complaint avenue available.

TO APPLY:

Applicants are invited to electronically submit a cover letter, resume (including educational information, employment experience and salary history), writing sample, a list of three (3) professional references and contact information, and a completed Application for Judicial Branch Employment (AO 78), which may be downloaded from the Court's web site at www.pamd.uscourts.gov.

All documents are to be forwarded in a single pdf file via email to:

hr1_pamd@pamd.uscourts.gov

Please include in the subject line of the e-mail: Pro Se Law Clerk (VA 24-01).

Closing date for applications is March 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. (close of business).

All information provided by an applicant is subject to verification. Applicants are advised that false statements or omission of information on any application materials may be grounds for non-selection, withdrawal of an offer of employment or dismissal after being employed.

The United States District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania, reserves the right to modify the conditions of this Vacancy Announcement, to withdraw the Vacancy Announcement, or to fill the position at any time before the closing date, any of which actions may occur without any prior written or other notice. Due to the volume of applications received for this position, only candidates in consideration will be contacted.

Employees of the United States District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania, serve under excepted appointments and are considered "at will" and can be terminated with or without cause at any time.

The United States District Court, Middle District of Pennsylvania, is an Equal Opportunity Employer.