

OFFICE OF STAFF COUNSEL

**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT
Richmond, Virginia**

FEDERAL CLERKSHIP OPPORTUNITY

February 19, 2014

Announcement Number: 14-01
Position Title: Staff Attorney
Nature of Appointment: Successful candidates will be appointed to one-year term positions. Contingent on performance and budget availability, appointed candidates may be given the opportunity to have their terms extended for a second year.

Number of Vacancies: Up to four positions. The number of staff attorneys to be hired will be determined by office needs, funding availability, and the strength of the applicant pool.

Starting Salary: \$59,155 for recent law school graduates; successful candidates with relevant legal experience may qualify for a higher starting salary.

Position Location: Richmond, Virginia
Position Starting Date: Successful candidates will be expected to commence their service during the Summer or early Fall of 2014. One or more positions may be available as early as Spring 2014.

Recruitment Schedule: Applications will be accepted upon issuance of this Vacancy Announcement. While this Vacancy Announcement will remain open until all available staff attorney positions are filled, all hiring will likely be completed during April 2014. To ensure full consideration, application materials must be received by Monday, March 17, 2014. Application packages received or completed after this date may be accorded more cursory evaluation.

Application Procedures: Applications must be submitted online through the OSCAR (Online System for Clerkship Application and Review) website maintained by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. Applications received through other means will not be considered.

POSITION SUMMARY: The Office of Staff Counsel, United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, is soliciting applications for staff attorney positions from third-year law students, law clerks, and attorneys. Staff attorneys will be appointed to one-year term positions. If adequate funding is received in Fiscal Year 2015, staff attorneys selected pursuant to this Vacancy Announcement may be offered the opportunity to extend their appointments for a second year. Applicants interested in part-time work may be considered, depending upon office needs. While several positions may be available as early as Spring 2014, it is anticipated that most positions will be filled by candidates who will commence employment in August or September 2014. Exact starting dates will be determined by office needs and applicant availability.

RESPONSIBILITIES: Staff attorneys assist the judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in the consideration and resolution of cases on appeal. Attorneys review appeal records in cases that are diverted from the oral argument calendar and prepare proposed opinions and orders for consideration by panels of three judges. The office reviews over 4000 appeals each year. Approximately half of the cases assigned to staff attorneys are prisoner civil rights and post-conviction relief appeals, approximately one-fourth are direct appeals from criminal convictions in federal district courts, and the balance are counseled and pro se appeals from federal civil judgments and final decisions by various federal agencies.

QUALIFICATIONS: Recruitment standards for staff attorney positions are selective, and the hiring process is highly competitive. Applicants must be students at, or graduates of, AALS-accredited law schools, and must be either United States citizens or noncitizens eligible to work for the United States government. In addition, the most competitive applicants will:

- be in the top 10% of their law school graduating class;
- have law review or similar legal publication experience, writing experience as a member of an interscholastic moot court competition team, or equivalent exceptional writing experience;
- possess particular proficiency in legal analysis and writing ability; and
- demonstrate exemplary oral communication skills.

In addition, applicants should possess a genuine interest in the subject areas typically presented in the appeals assigned to staff attorneys. These subject areas include criminal law and procedure, constitutional law, evidence, employment law, civil rights litigation, federal jurisdiction, administrative law, and prisoner post-conviction relief law.

SALARY AND BENEFITS: Applicants hired directly out of law school and those with minimal experience will be appointed at Court Personnel System (CPS) Classification Level

27, step 25, at a current annual salary of \$59,155. Starting salary offers above \$59,155 will reflect individual qualifications, experience, and salary history. Absent unusually unique and pertinent post-law school experience, however, budgetary constraints will limit the maximum starting grade level that successful candidates will be offered to CPS Classification Level 28, step 25, at a current annual salary of \$70,903. Upon satisfactory performance, staff attorneys are ordinarily considered for promotion no later than at the conclusion of their first year of employment. Staff attorneys receive annual and sick leave and are eligible to participate in federal health and life insurance programs.

Funding is allotted to the Office of Staff Counsel on a fiscal year basis. Thus, the level of funding for Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015) will not be finalized until Congress passes necessary appropriations bills. Inadequate funding may require freezes on pay increases, including promotions. In addition, due to budgetary uncertainties, federal employees, including court staff, are subject to the possibility of being furloughed (required to take a period of mandatory unpaid leave) during Fiscal Year 2015.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES: Application packages will be accepted immediately. To ensure full consideration, completed application packages must be received by Monday, March 17, 2014. Application packages will be considered complete upon receipt of the following items:

- a cover letter;
- a current resume;
- a writing sample edited only by the applicant;
- a copy of the applicant's law school transcript;
- a statement of the applicant's current or final law school class ranking (if not reflected on the applicant's law school transcript) or a statement that explains why such information is unavailable; and
- the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of at least three references having first-hand bases for evaluating the applicant's aptitude for the work performed by staff attorneys. (Letters of reference are not required.).

Application materials must be submitted through the OSCAR website maintained by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, at <www.oscar.uscourts.gov>.

The applicants considered most qualified will be invited for personal interviews. Interviews will be conducted at the Office of Staff Counsel in Richmond. Applicants invited for interviews must assume the cost of their own travel expenses.

Inquires regarding this recruitment may be addressed to:

Carolyn S. Neal
Personnel Officer
Office of Staff Counsel
600 E. Main Street; Suite 2200
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2441
(804) 916-2900
Carolyn_Neal@ca4.uscourts.gov

OFFICE ENVIRONMENT: The Office of Staff Counsel currently employs five supervisory staff attorneys, thirty staff attorneys, and eight administrative support personnel. It is conveniently located in downtown Richmond, in a well-maintained office building with first class views and amenities. The office is a smoke-free workplace.

The standard computer set-up for staff attorneys' offices permits efficient handling of work assignments. All attorney offices are equipped with a desktop CPU, dual monitors, and a printer. In addition, laptop computers are available to permit secure remote access to all office files and databases.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

Approximately one-half of the legal staff joined the Office of Staff Counsel directly upon graduation from law school; the remainder have come from other state and federal judicial clerkships, private practice, or public sector employment. Upon the conclusion of their appointments, staff attorneys have obtained other judicial clerkships, sought advanced legal degrees, and have assumed positions with law firms, prosecutors' and public defenders' offices, academia, the Department of Justice, and other state and federal agencies.

The Office of Staff Counsel provides reasonable accommodations to prospective applicants and applicants with disabilities. If a prospective applicant requires a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application process, or an applicant invited for an interview requires a reasonable accommodation for any part of the interview process, please contact Carolyn S. Neal, Personnel Officer, at the address or phone number noted above. Requests for an accommodation will be individually considered and decisions will be promptly made.

Applicants who accept offers of employment will be required to submit to a name and fingerprint background investigation. Employment is conditioned upon the satisfactory outcome of the required background inquiry.

In addition, each applicant who accepts an offer of employment is required to provide a certified copy of his or her final law school transcript that confirms the satisfactory completion of law school studies and the award of a degree. Failure to timely comply with

this requirement, or the receipt of a certified transcript that materially differs from the transcript provided during the application process, may result in the withdrawal of the offer of employment.

Salaries are paid through mandatory Electronic Funds Transfers.

THE OFFICE OF STAFF COUNSEL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER.