Federal Staff Attorney
Career Opportunity

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

WEBSITE
ca4.uscourts.gov

PHONE
804-916-2900

- **Announcement #:** 26-03
- **Location:** Richmond, VA
- **Appointment:** Full time / Career
- **Open Until Filled** – Preference given to applications received by August 28, 2026
- **Number of Vacancies:** Up to two (2)

Fourth Circuit

The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit encompasses the states of Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The Fourth Circuit prides itself on being a collegial and collaborative workplace. We are an organization that promotes creativity and innovation, believes in diversity and inclusion, recognizes excellence, and is important to the administration of justice.

ABOUT THE JOB

The Office of Staff Counsel is soliciting applications for staff attorney positions from attorneys with experience in immigration law or agency benefits matters, and/or criminal and postconviction law. Upon completion of a one-year probationary period, successful applicants will be appointed to career positions. Applicants interested in part-time work may be considered.

The office reviews an average of 2,800 appeals each year. The office is looking for attorneys who have experience with prisoner civil rights and postconviction relief appeals, direct appeals from criminal convictions in federal district courts, immigration and other agency cases, and counseled and pro se appeals from federal civil judgments.

We are looking for strong candidates who share our vision of excellence and passion for the administration of justice. Successful candidates will be expected to commence their service in fall 2026.

OVERVIEW OF DUTIES

- Conduct comprehensive analysis of records and briefs in cases that are diverted from the oral argument calendar.
- Make recommendations to three-judge panels for disposition of appeals in wide-ranging areas of law.
- Support recommendations with well-researched and well-written memoranda, proposed opinions, and proposed orders.

The Court offers a robust and competitive benefits package (**see Page Two**) and is a qualifying employer for **Public Service Loan Forgiveness**.

STARTING SALARY RANGES

- **$78,009** (CL-27/ Step 25) to **$83,357** (CL-28/ Step 12), with increases possible each year based on performance and budget. After two years of employment with the Court, an attorney with previous experience may earn up to **$111, 183** (CL-29/Step 25).
- In addition to the required qualifications, CL-28 requires one year of full-time specialized experience.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required Qualifications

- Juris Doctor (JD) degree from an AALS-accredited law school, or admission to practice before the highest court of a State, Territory, Commonwealth, or federal court of general jurisdiction of the United States.
- Excellent academic achievement. Rank in the top 10% of the applicant's law school graduating class is preferred.
- Writing experience on law review or similar legal publication, or as a member of an interscholastic moot court competition team.
- Proficiency in legal analysis and writing ability.
- Professional experience working on cases involving criminal and prisoner law, immigration (removal, asylum, and the like), Social Security claims, or black lung benefits.

Applicants should possess a genuine interest in subject areas including criminal law and procedure, agency law, immigration, constitutional law, evidence, employment law, civil rights litigation, federal jurisdiction, and prisoner postconviction relief law.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applications must be submitted online through the OSCAR (Online System for Clerkship Application and Review) website**. Applications received through other means will not be considered. Application packages must contain the following:**

1. Cover letter;
2. Current resume;
3. Writing sample edited only by the applicant (preferably not a law review article);
4. Copy of law school transcript;
5. Statement of applicant's final law school class ranking or a statement explaining why such information is unavailable; and
6. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three (3) professional references with first-hand bases for evaluating the applicant's aptitude for the work performed by staff attorneys. (Letters of reference are not desired.)

Qualified applicants will be invited for interviews in person or via Teams or other similar platforms, depending on availability and circumstances. Inquiries regarding this recruitment may be addressed to:

Melissa L. Wood, Senior Staff Attorney
1100 E. Main Street, Suite 325
Richmond, VA 23219
Melissa_Wood@ca4.uscourts.gov

BENEFITS

- **Vacation time** accrues at a rate of 104 hours per year the first three years and increases with tenure.
- **Sick days** accrue at a rate of 104 hours per year.
- Eleven paid annual **holidays**.
- **Flexible schedules**.
- **Merit-based time-off awards.**
- Twice-weekly **telework** option.
- Agency-subsidized federal **health insurance** plans**, dental** and **vision** coverage, and **life insurance** are available.
- **Flexible spending accounts** for healthcare, dependent care, and commuter expenses.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Applicants must be citizens of the United States or meet requirements under current law. Federal judiciary employees serve under "Excepted Appointments," and are thus "at-will," and as such, can be terminated with or without cause. Employees are subject to the Judicial Code of Ethics and Conduct, which is available to applicants for review upon request. All applicant information is subject to verification.

Employees are required to use Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for payroll deposits. Reimbursement for interview-related travel expenses or any relocation costs incurred by successful applicants is not provided. Although some telework is permitted, the office does not permit fully remote work.

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.

The appointment to the position is provisional pending a suitability determination by the Court based on the results of an FBI background check that includes fingerprinting.

OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the senior staff attorney, the Office of Staff Counsel employs one deputy senior staff attorney, four supervisory staff attorneys, twenty-three attorneys, and five administrative support personnel. The office is located in the historic Lewis F. Powell, Jr., United States Courthouse and Annex in downtown Richmond, Virginia.

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

To facilitate the professional development of new staff attorneys, attorneys are mentored by a peer coach and a supervisor, and work on a team including both term and career staff attorneys. Staff attorneys are encouraged to attend oral arguments and training sessions.

Our culture focuses on a healthy work/life balance; personal wellness; diversity, equity, and inclusion; camaraderie and community; and a shared commitment to excellence in the administration of justice. We strive to make all staff members feel welcome and valued.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION

The Office of Staff Counsel provides reasonable accommodations to applicants with disabilities. If an applicant requires a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application or interview process, please contact Melissa L. Wood, Senior Staff Attorney, at the email address noted above. Requests for an accommodation will be individually considered, and decisions will be promptly made.

The duty station for the staff attorney positions is Richmond, Virginia. Full-time remote work is not permitted, though telework is permitted two days per week after an initial training period. Richmond boasts a vibrant and diverse arts and performance scene, world-class theater, music, and museums, eclectic and creative dining destinations, and award-winning outdoor opportunities centering on the James River. Richmond is only a short drive from the Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia Beach, the Chesapeake Bay, and Washington, D.C.

The Court reserves the right to modify the conditions of this job announcement, to withdraw the job announcement, or to fill the position sooner than the closing date, if a closing date is shown; any of these actions may occur without any prior notice.

THE U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER THAT VALUES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS.