

OFFICE OF STAFF COUNSEL

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

FEDERAL CLERKSHIP OPPORTUNITY

October 16, 2017

Announcement Number: 17-01
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 offered an extension of their appointments for a second year.

Number of Vacancies: Up to seven 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: \$61,848 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 as soon as December 2017, and no later than September 2018.

Recruitment Schedule: While this posting will remain open until all available staff attorney positions are filled, all hiring will likely be completed during November 2017 and December 2017. To ensure full consideration, application materials must be received by Wednesday, November 8, 2017. Application packages received or completed after November 8 may not be accorded a complete review.

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, <www.oscar.uscourts.gov>. 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. Depending on office funding levels and employee performance, staff attorneys selected pursuant to this Vacancy Announcement may be offered an extension of their appointments for a second year. Applicants interested in part-time work may be considered, depending upon office needs. Some positions may be filled by candidates who are immediately available; the remaining positions will be filled by candidates who will commence employment in Summer or early Fall 2018. 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 memorandum and 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 postconviction 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:

- rank 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.

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, black lung benefits, immigration, Social Security, and prisoner postconviction 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 \$61,848. Starting salary offers above \$61,848 will reflect individual qualifications, experience, and salary history. Absent unique and pertinent post-law school experience, however, budgetary constraints will limit the maximum starting grade level to CPS Classification Level 28, step 13, at a current annual salary of \$66,714. Upon satisfactory performance, staff attorneys are ordinarily considered for promotion 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. The level of funding for Fiscal Year 2018 (October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018) will not be finalized until Congress passes necessary appropriations bills. Inadequate funding may result in pay freezes, elimination or deferral of promotions, and in the case of extreme budgetary shortfall, the imposition of furloughs (mandatory unpaid leave).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES:

Application packages will be accepted immediately. To ensure full consideration, completed application packages must be received by Wednesday, November 8, 2017. 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 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. Relocation costs will not be reimbursed.

Inquiries regarding this recruitment may be addressed to:

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

OFFICE ENVIRONMENT:

In addition to the senior staff attorney, the Office of Staff Counsel currently employs five supervisory staff attorneys, twenty-nine attorneys, and seven administrative support personnel. It is conveniently located in downtown Richmond, in the historic Lewis F. Powell, Jr., United States Courthouse and Annex. 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 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.

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 Court reserves the right to modify the conditions of this job, 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 OFFICE OF STAFF COUNSEL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER
THAT VALUES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS.**