

Arizona Judicial Appointments & Retention, 2002–Present

Appointments by governor (statewide + Maricopa Superior) · Maricopa retention removals

Prepared August 21, 2026 by Brad Newman

Background

There has been much discussion about changing the judiciary. We all want more conservative judges and at election time, so we naturally focus on who should be fired to create openings.

The question that should be answered is, **“What is the most effective approach to change the judiciary?”**

There are two paths for judges to leave the bench (thru Attrition and by Voter Decision (not retained)). But, there is only one path by which judges are appointed – by the governor.

The analysis below was done using Claude AI as a super search engine to gather data on how judges have left the bench (attrition vs not retained). The best data available is from 2008 forward, but the search found some data going back to the 1970’s. The focus is on total appointments as the granularity of data is reduced in older records.

Analysis

The data clearly shows judges leave the bench through natural attrition (career, health, choice, etc) far more than by voter rejection.

In Maricopa Superior Court, at least 134 judges have been appointed since 2003, while only 4 of these appointments were because of a voter rejection (not retained). So, 130 judges left through natural attrition and only 4 left because they were not retained by voters. This represents at least a 30:1 ratio of natural attrition to voter rejection. Statewide, at least 37 appointments have been made since 2003 with no statewide voter rejections by voters. We must go back to 1978 to find the only statewide judge that was not retained by voters.

Conclusion - What is the most effective approach to change the judiciary?

Campaign focus should be on **electing a conservative governor** rather than judge retention. Successfully not retaining a judge is very rare. In contrast, the election of a conservative governor controls all future appointments from natural attrition at more than a **30:1 ratio**. Additionally, a conservative governor appoints the ~2/3 of the members of feeder committees that screen attorneys and judges for appointment by the governor.

Of course, this analysis does not imply that judges are unimportant. What it does say is the higher leverage campaign effort is to focus on electing Andy Biggs rather than focusing too much effort on judges’ elections.

Conclusion: Elect a conservative governor. Electing a conservative governor has far greater judicial impact for the effort to mobilize voters.

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Governors Covering the Window

Governor	Party	Term (within 2002–present)
Janet Napolitano	Democratic	Jan 2003 – Jan 2009
Jan Brewer	Republican	Jan 2009 – Jan 2015
Doug Ducey	Republican	Jan 2015 – Jan 2023
Katie Hobbs	Democratic	Jan 2023 – present

Part 1 — Appointments by Governor: Summary

Governor	Statewide (Sup. Ct + COA I)	Maricopa Superior
Napolitano	7+	25+
Brewer	5+	67 all AZ; 36 in MC (est, see below)
Ducey	21	58
Hobbs	4	15+ (ongoing)

Part 1 — Judge Appointment Detail by Governor

Janet Napolitano (D) — 2003–2009

Statewide (7+, floor): Supreme Court — Andrew Hurwitz (2003), W. Scott Bales (2005). Court of Appeals I — Patricia Norris (2003), Maurice Portley (2003), Patricia Orozco (2004), Diane Johnsen (2006), Michael J. Brown (2008). Additional Division One picks may exist.

Maricopa Superior (25+, floor): Ballotpedia individually catalogs 25 Napolitano Superior Court appointees. Named examples include Bruce Cohen (2005), Christopher Whitten (2006), Randall Warner (2007), and Susan Brnovich (2009). A complete public roster is not available.

Jan Brewer (R) — 2009–2015

Statewide (5+, floor): Supreme Court — John Pelander (2009), Robert Brutinel (2010), Ann Timmer (2012). Court of Appeals I — Andrew Gould (2011), Randall Howe (2012), with additional Division One appointments not fully enumerated in accessible sources.

Maricopa Superior (not separable): Ballotpedia counts 67 Brewer appointees across all courts statewide but does not isolate the Maricopa Superior share. Maricopa County has 54% of total superior court judges in AZ, so we estimate ~36 of the Brewer appointments were in Maricopa County. Named examples include Jon W. Thompson-era appointees such as Judge Thompson (2010) and Judge Starr (2014).

Doug Ducey (R) — 2015–2023

Statewide (21): Supreme Court (6) — Clint Bolick (2016), Andrew Gould (2016), John Lopez IV (2016), James Beene (2019), Bill Montgomery (2019), Kathryn Hackett King (2021). Court of Appeals I (15) — Paul McMurdie (2016); Maria Elena Cruz, Jennifer Campbell, Jennifer Perkins, James Morse, James Beene (2017); David Weinzweig (2018); David Gass, D. Steven Williams (2019); Brian Furuya, Cynthia Bailey (2020); Angela Paton (2021); Michael Catlett, Anni Hill Foster, Daniel Kiley (2023).

Maricopa Superior (58): Documented appointees — Sara Agne, Glenn Allen, Stasy Avelar, Alison Bachus, Justin Beresky, Michael Blair, John Blanchard, Scott Blaney, Robert Brooks, Sunita Krishna Cairo, Theodore Campagnolo, Greg Como, Max-Henri Covil, Rusty Crandell, Kristin Culbertson, Quintin Cushner, Marvin Davis, James Drake, Adam Driggs, Monica Edelstein, Ronda Fisk, Dewain Fox, Jillian Francis, David Garbarino, Stephen Hopkins, Ashley Villaverde Halvorson, Charlene Jackson, Melissa Iyer Julian, Joseph Kiefer, James Knapp, Margaret LaBianca, Todd Lang, Kerstin LeMaire, Michael Mandell, Suzanne Marwil, Julie Mata, David McDowell, Scott Minder, Amanda Moncayo Parker, Suzanne Nicholls, Erin O'Brien Otis, Adele Ponce, Michael Rassas, Laura Reckart, Joshua Rogers, Jeffrey Rueter, Andrew Russell, Aryeh Schwartz, James Smith, Ronee

Korbin Steiner, Howard Sukenic, Michael Valenzuela, Lisa Ann Vandenberg, Lisa Wahlin, Kevin Wein, Roy Whitehead, Tracey Westerhausen, Cassie Woo.

Katie Hobbs (D) — 2023–present

Statewide (4): Supreme Court (1) — Maria Elena Cruz (2025). Court of Appeals I (3) — three appointments across 2023–2025.

Maricopa Superior (15+, ongoing): Ballotpedia documented 15 through early 2025; Hobbs has continued appointing since. Identified appointees include a first group of seven (March 2023) and two (June 2023); Janette Corral, Nicole Hartley, Brian Palmer (April 2025); Elizabeth Bingert, Rachel Hernandez (Oct 2025); Jessica Sanchez, B. Don Taylor III (Jan 2026); and Christian Bell, Utiki Laing, Ashley Rahaman (April 2026). The count is a moving target as her term continues.

Part 2 — Judges NOT Retained by Voters (2003 – 2026)

Window	Count	Judges (year)
Maricopa Superior Court	4	Benjamin Norris (2014); Rusty Crandell, Stephen Hopkins, Howard Sukenic (2022)
AZ Statewide Courts	0	Only one judge in 1978 (outside the evaluation window)

Maricopa Superior Court - No Maricopa County Superior Court judge was voted out between 1978 and 2014. The only Maricopa removals in the entire merit-selection era are Fred Hyder (1978), Benjamin Norris (2014), and the three removed in 2022. Judge Philip Marquardt was narrowly retained in 1988 despite a marijuana misdemeanor and later resigned in 1991 — he was not voted off the bench.

Statewide note. For completeness: no statewide (Supreme Court or Court of Appeals) judge has failed retention since Court of Appeals judge Gary Nelson in 1978.

Data-quality note

- Supreme Court appointments are exact and complete for all five governors.
- Ducey’s Court of Appeals I (15) and Maricopa Superior (58) lists are essentially complete; Hobbs’ statewide list is complete and her Maricopa list is complete through early 2025 and growing.
- Napolitano and Brewer appellate/Maricopa figures are understated: Ballotpedia does not fully cover pre-2008 appointments, so other sources were examined.
- A certified, gap-free roster for the earlier governors would require the Arizona Judicial Branch’s judicial-history files and the governors’ own appointment press releases (via the Commission on Appellate / Trial Court Appointments), which are not consolidated into any single public table.

Sources: Ballotpedia per-governor appointee lists and category counts; Wikipedia justice/judge profiles; Arizona Governor’s Office press releases; FOX10 Phoenix and Center for Arizona Policy for retention history. Current as of August 2026.