

FEDERAL v. STATE COURT SYSTEMS

UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court consists of nine Justices who are appointed by the President for life, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Court decides which cases to hear and has final authority in all matters concerning the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

FEDERAL COURT

UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEALS

The United States Circuit Court of Appeals is made up of 13 circuits — 12 regional circuits and one federal circuit — with a total of 179 judgeships. Judges are appointed for life by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The court hears all appeals brought before it. Wisconsin is part of the Seventh Circuit, which is located in Chicago.

FEDERAL DISTRICT COURTS

The United States judicial system consists of 94 districts across the country, including Puerto Rico, along with two special trial courts that hold nationwide jurisdiction: the U.S. Court of International Trade and the U.S. Court of Federal Claims, in addition to U.S. Bankruptcy Courts. Judges are appointed for life by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate. These trial courts have original jurisdiction in all cases involving federal law. In Wisconsin, there are two district courts: the Eastern District, located in Milwaukee, and the Western District, located in Madison.



STATE COURT

WISCONSIN SUPREME COURT

The state Supreme Court consists of seven Justices who are elected to 10-year terms through non-partisan elections. The Court decides which cases to hear, reviewing petitions annually and hearing cases during sessions that run from September through June. As an appellate court, it holds final authority on matters within its jurisdiction.

WISCONSIN COURT OF APPEALS

The Wisconsin Court of Appeals is made up of 16 judges, divided into four geographic districts, with three to five judges per district. These districts are located in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Wausau, and Madison. Judges are elected to six-year terms in non-partisan elections. The Court hears all appeals brought before it and holds appellate jurisdiction. It serves as Wisconsin's error-correcting court.

WISCONSIN CIRCUIT COURT

The Wisconsin circuit courts consist of 261 judges, with the number of judges per circuit depending on caseload. Judges are elected to six-year terms in non-partisan elections. Court commissioners, who are legally trained officers of the court, may handle certain administrative and pre-trial matters that come before the circuit courts. Generally, each county serves as a circuit, with the exception of six counties that are combined to form three circuits: Menominee/Shawano, Buffalo/Pepin, and Florence/Forest. These trial courts have original jurisdiction in criminal and civil cases.

WISCONSIN MUNICIPAL COURTS

Wisconsin's municipal courts are comprised of 223 judges in 221 municipal courts (not all communities choose to have a municipal court). Municipal judges are elected to two- to four-year terms, as determined by the municipality, in non-partisan elections. These judges have exclusive jurisdiction over ordinance violations.

WISCONSIN TRIBAL COURTS

There are 11 tribal courts in Wisconsin. Jurisdiction between tribal and state courts is complicated and sometimes concurrent. Generally, tribal courts have jurisdiction over civil matters and matters of tribal law, involving tribal members or cases that take place on tribal land. State courts have jurisdiction over criminal matters.