

Honorable Michele M. Christiansen – Utah Court of Appeals

Serving the State of Utah



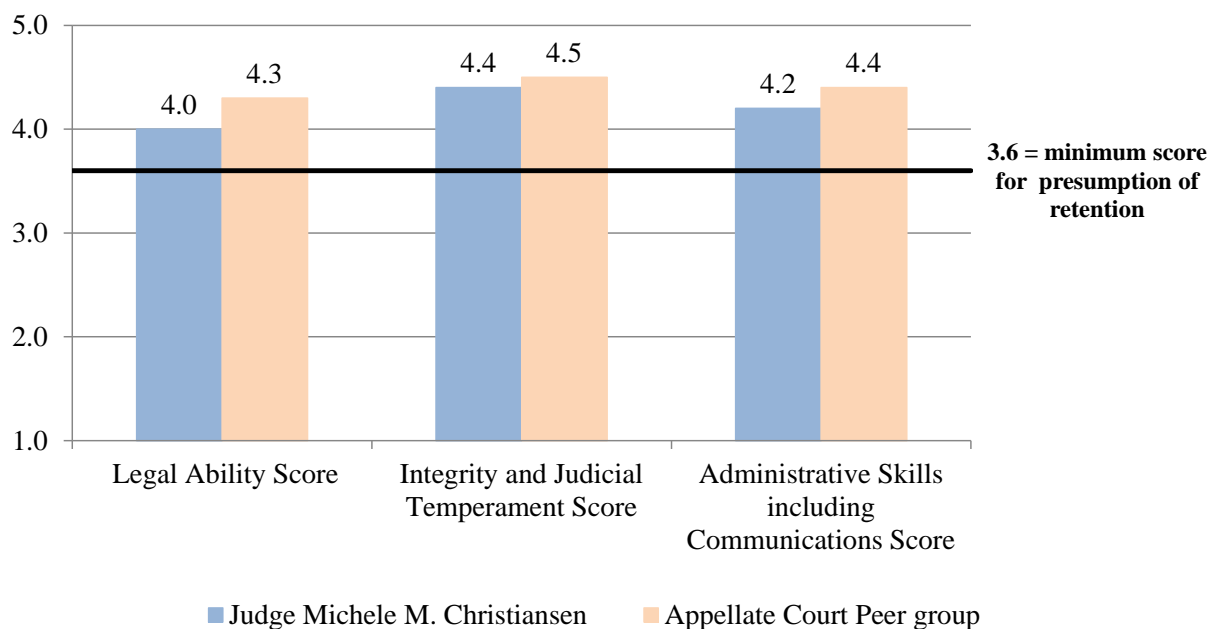
Commission Recommendation: **RETAIN**

(vote count: 12-0 for retention)

Appointed to the court of appeals in 2010 after three years as a trial court judge, Judge Michele Christiansen scored consistent with the average of her appellate court peers in all survey categories. Survey respondents characterized Judge Christiansen as attentive, polite, and intelligent, scoring her most favorably for the equal respect she shows all courtroom participants. Of the adjectives chosen to describe her, 90% were positive. Of respondents who answered the retention question, 86% recommended that Judge Christiansen be retained. Despite these commendable survey results, Judge Christiansen was slow in writing opinions and thus did not meet the judiciary’s minimum performance standard governing timeliness of opinions. The commission has some concern about a pattern of lateness; however, because the conditions affecting Judge Christiansen’s performance appear to be temporary and her survey results are solidly acceptable, the commission recommends that Judge Christiansen be retained.

The commission reviewed surveys in addition to verifying that Judge Christiansen has met all judicial education requirements and discipline standards established by the judicial branch.

Judge Michele M. Christiansen was appointed to the Utah Court of Appeals in June 2010 after serving for three years as a Third District Court judge. After graduating from the University of Utah College of Law, she clerked for U.S. District Court Judge Tena Campbell. She then worked in private practice at Parsons Behle & Latimer, as a federal prosecutor, and as General Counsel for Governor Jon Huntsman. Judge Christiansen currently serves as co-chair of the Utah State Bar’s Pro Bono Commission, serves on the Utah Supreme Court Advisory Committee on the Rules of Criminal Procedure, the Judicial Council’s Ethics Advisory Committee, is chair of the Judicial Council’s Commissioner Conduct Committee, and is an adjunct professor at the U of U College of Law.



The Honorable Michele M. Christiansen

Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission Report

Retention 2014

Table of Contents

I. Survey Report

| | |
|---|----|
| Survey Results | 1 |
| A. How to Read the Results | 1 |
| B. Statutory Category Scores | 2 |
| C. Procedural Fairness Survey Score | 3 |
| D. Responses to Individual Survey Questions | 4 |
| E. Adjective Question Summary | 6 |
| F. Retention Question | 7 |
| G. Attorney Demographics | 8 |
| Survey Background and Methods | 9 |
| A. Survey Overview | 9 |
| B. Evaluation Period | 10 |

I. Survey Report

Survey Results

A. How to Read the Results

For Judge Michele M. Christiansen, 57% of qualified survey respondents submitted surveys. Of those who responded, 65 agreed they had worked with Judge Michele M. Christiansen enough to evaluate her performance. This report reflects the 65 responses. The survey results are divided into five sections:

- Statutory category scores
- Procedural fairness survey score
- Responses to individual survey questions
- Summary of adjectives
- Retention question

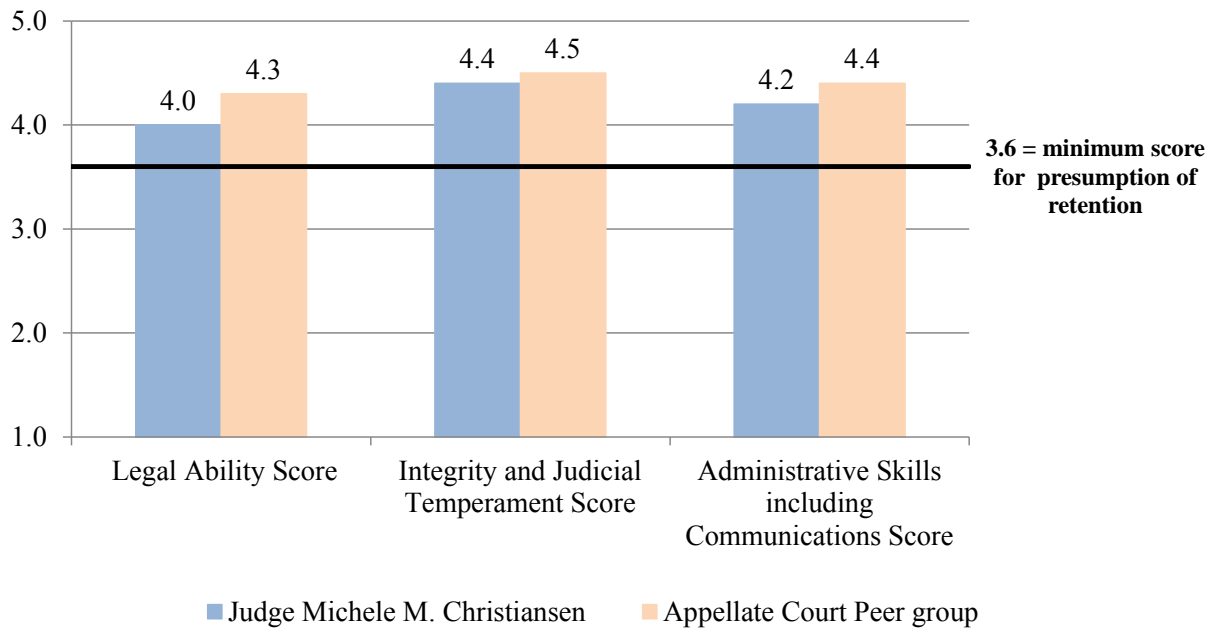
The results are shown in both graphs and tables. Each judge's scores are shown along with a comparison to other judges who serve at the same court level. The comparison group is called "Appellate Court" on the charts.

The statutory category scores and the procedural fairness survey score represent average scores on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 5 (outstanding). Responses from all survey respondent groups contribute to the average score shown for each category, with the exception of Legal Ability. Only attorneys answer these questions.

What does it take to "pass"? The judge must score a minimum of 3.6 on Legal Ability, Integrity & Judicial Temperament, and Administrative Skills to earn a presumption of retention from the Commission. That is, if a judge scores an average of 3.6 in each of these categories, the commission will vote to recommend retention unless it can articulate a substantial reason for overcoming the presumption in favor of retention. Similarly, if a judge fails to get a 3.6 in a category, the commission will vote against retention unless it can articulate a substantial reason for overcoming the presumption against retention.

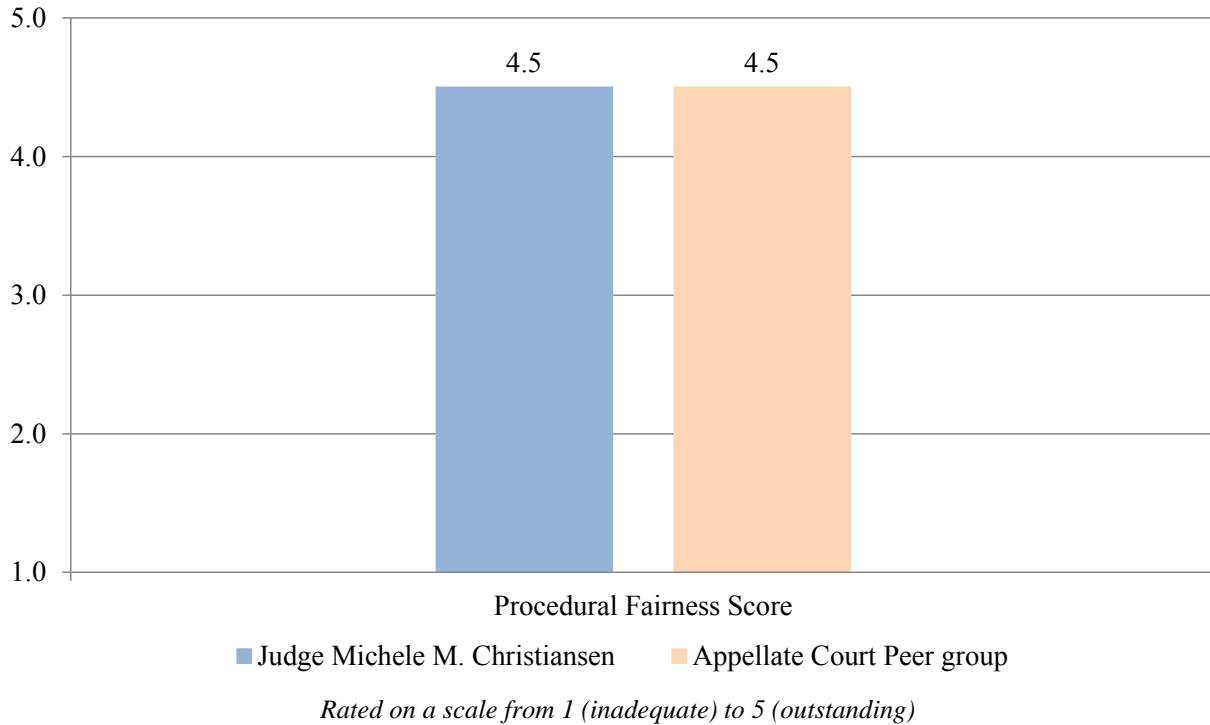
For procedural fairness, the judge must demonstrate that it is more likely than not, based on courtroom observations and relevant survey responses, that the judge's conduct in court promotes procedural fairness for court participants. Judges will receive either a Pass or Fail in procedural fairness, and this determination will be made by the commission only during the retention cycle.

B. Statutory Category Scores



Rated on a scale from 1 (inadequate) to 5 (outstanding)

C. Procedural Fairness Survey Score



For procedural fairness, the judge must demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that the judge’s conduct in court promotes procedural fairness for court participants. This determination is based on relevant survey responses.

Overall Procedural Fairness Determination

| Category | Judge Michele M. Christiansen |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Procedural Fairness | PASS |

D. Responses to Individual Survey Questions

| Category | Question | Judge Michele M. Christiansen | Appellate Court |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Legal Ability | The judge follows the applicable legal rules (e.g. civil procedure, criminal procedure, evidence, juvenile, appellate) that apply to the case at issue. | 4.1 | 4.4 |
| Legal Ability | The judge makes appropriate findings of fact and applies the law to those facts. | 4.0 | 4.2 |
| Legal Ability | The judge follows legal precedent or clearly explains departures from precedent. | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Legal Ability | The judge only considers evidence in the record. | 4.2 | 4.3 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions/decisions offer meaningful legal analysis. | 3.8 | 4.3 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions contain a fair statement of the pertinent facts. | 4.0 | 4.3 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions contain a discussion of the applicable legal principles and controlling case law. | 3.9 | 4.3 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions clearly address the merits of the legal issues advanced by the parties. | 3.8 | 4.2 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions provide clear guidance to trial court judges and practitioners. | 3.8 | 4.2 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions contain a readily understandable, concise ruling. | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Legal Ability | The judge's written opinions reflect a neutral, professional tone. | 4.2 | 4.3 |
| Integrity & Judicial Temperament | The judge makes sure that everyone's behavior in the courtroom is proper. | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Integrity & Judicial Temperament | The judge appears to pay attention to what goes on in court. | 4.4 | 4.6 |
| Integrity & Judicial Temperament | The judge's personal life or beliefs do not impair his or her judicial performance. | 4.5 | 4.4 |

Rated on a scale from 1 (inadequate) to 5 (outstanding)

| Category | Question | Judge Michele M. Christiansen | Appellate Court |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Administrative Skills | The judge is prepared for court proceedings. | 4.3 | 4.6 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge's interactions with courtroom participants and staff are professional and constructive. | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge is an effective manager. | 4.2 | 4.5 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge rules in a timely fashion. | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge maintains diligent work habits. | 4.6 | 4.8 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge's oral communications are clear. | 4.2 | 4.5 |
| Administrative Skills | The judge's written opinions/decisions are clear and logical. | 4.0 | 4.3 |
| Procedural Fairness | The judge treats all courtroom participants with equal respect. | 4.6 | 4.5 |
| Procedural Fairness | The judge is fair and impartial. | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Procedural Fairness | The judge promotes public trust and confidence in the courts through his or her conduct. | 4.4 | 4.4 |
| Procedural Fairness | The judge provides the parties with a meaningful opportunity to be heard. | 4.5 | 4.5 |

Rated on a scale from 1 (inadequate) to 5 (outstanding)

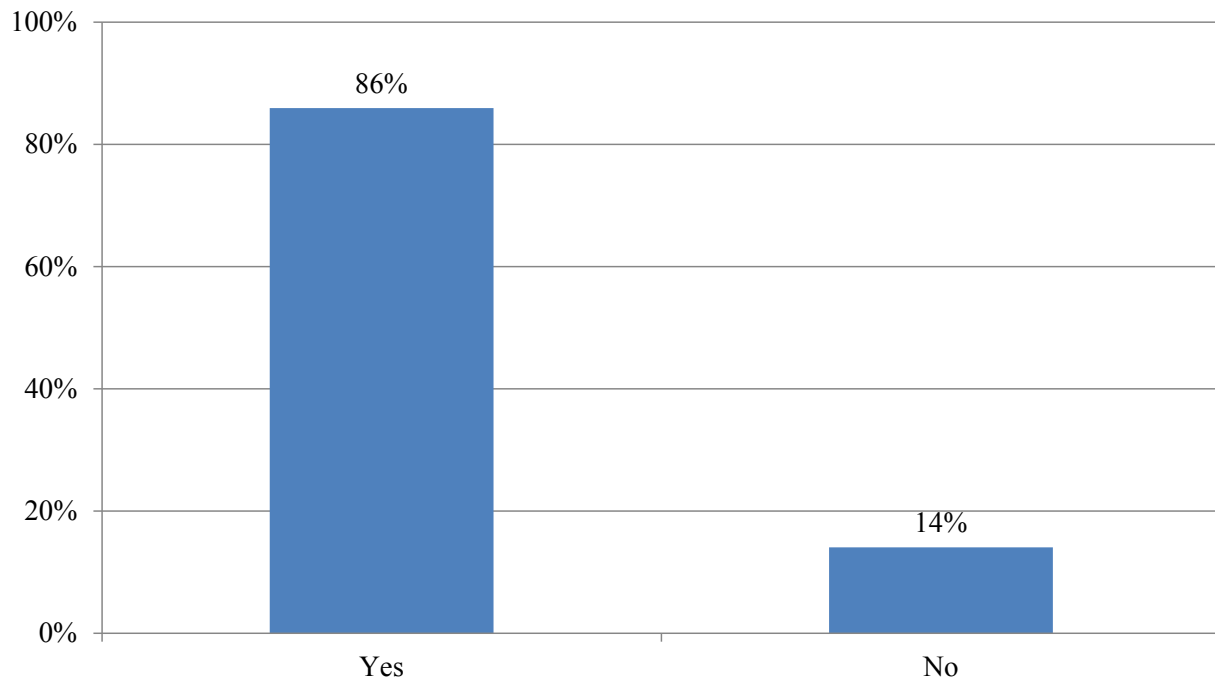
E. Adjective Question Summary

| | Number of Times Mentioned* |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Attentive | 36 |
| Calm | 21 |
| Confident | 12 |
| Considerate | 27 |
| Consistent | 5 |
| Intelligent | 30 |
| Knowledgeable | 21 |
| Patient | 19 |
| Polite | 44 |
| Receptive | 19 |
| Arrogant | 3 |
| Cantankerous | 2 |
| Defensive | 3 |
| Dismissive | 5 |
| Disrespectful | 1 |
| Flippant | 3 |
| Impatient | 2 |
| Indecisive | 6 |
| Rude | 1 |
| Total Positive Adjectives | 234 |
| Total Negative Adjectives | 26 |
| Percent of Positive Adjectives | 90% |

Respondents were asked to select adjectives from a list that best described the judge. The number shown is the total number of times an adjective was selected by respondents. The percent of positive adjectives shows the percent of *all* selected adjectives that were positive.

F. Retention Question

Would you recommend that Judge Michele M. Christiansen be retained?



G. Attorney Demographics

What are your primary areas of practice?

| | |
|-------------|-----|
| Collections | 2% |
| Domestic | 6% |
| Criminal | 32% |
| Civil | 57% |
| Other | 11% |

How many trials or hearings have you had with this judge over the past year?

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| 5 or fewer | 85% |
| 6 - 10 | 6% |
| 11 - 15 | 6% |
| 16 - 20 | - |
| More than 20 | 4% |

Survey Background and Methods

This report presents the results from the 2013 survey process, conducted by Market Decisions, LLC. A detailed description of the survey methodology is available separately on the Utah Judicial Performance Evaluation website.

A. Survey Overview

1. Description of Sample

The following groups are invited to participate in the survey process:

- Attorneys with appearances before the judge
- Court staff who work with the judge
- Juvenile court professionals who work in the judge's courtroom on a regular and continuing basis to provide substantive input to the judge (juvenile court judges only)
- Jurors who participate in jury deliberation (district and justice court judges only)

With the exception of the attorney survey, the survey contractor attempts to survey all court staff and juvenile court professionals who work with judge and all jurors who reach the point of jury deliberation. The lists of court staff and juvenile court professionals are provided by the courts and by the Division of Child and Family Services and Juvenile Justice Services. A list of jurors is created after each trial. All lists are forwarded to the surveyor, Market Decisions, LLC.

For the attorney survey, a representative sample of attorneys is drawn to evaluate each judge based on appearances over a designated two-year period. The sample is weighted to select those with the greatest experience before the judge, assuming that these people will have a better knowledge base about the judge than those with less experience. Attorneys are first stratified into three groups; those with one or more trial appearances, those with 3 or more non-trial appearances, and those with 1-2 non-trial appearances. Attorneys within each sample are then randomized prior to selection. Selection begins with attorneys who have trial experience, then those with a greater number of non-trial appearances (if needed), and finally those with fewer non-trial appearances (if needed).

2. Summary of Survey Methods

Surveys are conducted online, using web-based survey software. Each respondent receives an initial email invitation requesting participation in the survey. A separate email is sent for each judge that a respondent is asked to evaluate. A reminder email is sent one week later to those who did not respond by completing and submitting a survey. This is followed by three additional reminder emails sent to respondents over the next three weeks. If a respondent completes only part of the survey, he or she is able to finish the survey at a later time. Once a respondent has completed the survey for a specific judge, the survey is locked and cannot be accessed again.

The number of questions included in the survey varies, ranging from 9 (jurors) to 24 (attorneys with an appearance before an appellate court judge). Each question is evaluated on a sliding scale ranging from 1 (inadequate) to 5 (outstanding).

Responses to individual questions are used to calculate averaged scores in three statutory categories: Legal Ability, Integrity & Judicial Temperament, and Administrative Skills. Judges also receive an averaged score in Procedural Fairness.

B. Evaluation Period

The retention evaluation period for judges standing for election in 2014 began on June 1, 2012 and ended on June 30, 2013.