



## JPEC 2021 Report to the Community: 2020 Judicial Retention Election

Court Level	Regular	Provisional*	Total
Supreme Court	0	1	1
Court of Appeals	2	4	6
District Court	12	8	20
Juvenile Court	3	6	9
Justice Court	7	16	23
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>24 (41%)</b>	<b>35 (59%)</b>	<b>59</b>

\*According to the Utah Constitution, judges must stand for the first general election at least three years after appointment. The provisional term is shorter (3-5 years) than the regular term. Judges in Utah serve six-year terms, except for justices on the Utah Supreme Court who serve ten-year terms.

**74** judges were eligible to stand for retention, as of 1/1/18.

At the end of survey cycle, 9/30/2019, JPEC completed **65** retention evaluation reports.

**59** judges appeared on the ballot and on [judges.utah.gov](http://judges.utah.gov).

2020 was the first, provisional retention election for **59%** of judges on the ballot,

Voters retained **59** judges.

### What is JPEC?

The Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission was established by state statute in 2008. Its goals are:

- ✓ To provide voters with valid information about each judge's performance;
- ✓ To provide judges with useful feedback about their performance so they may become better judges and thereby improve the quality of the judiciary; and
- ✓ To promote public accountability of the judiciary while ensuring that it continues to operate as an independent branch of government.

### Did you know?

*Statute requires commissioners to vote in favor of a judge's retention if the judge meets minimum standards, unless there is substantial countervailing evidence why the judge should not be retained.*

### 2020 Elections Outreach

JPEC seeks an informed electorate for judicial retention elections. Results include:

**20%** of Utah voters visited [judges.utah.gov](http://judges.utah.gov).

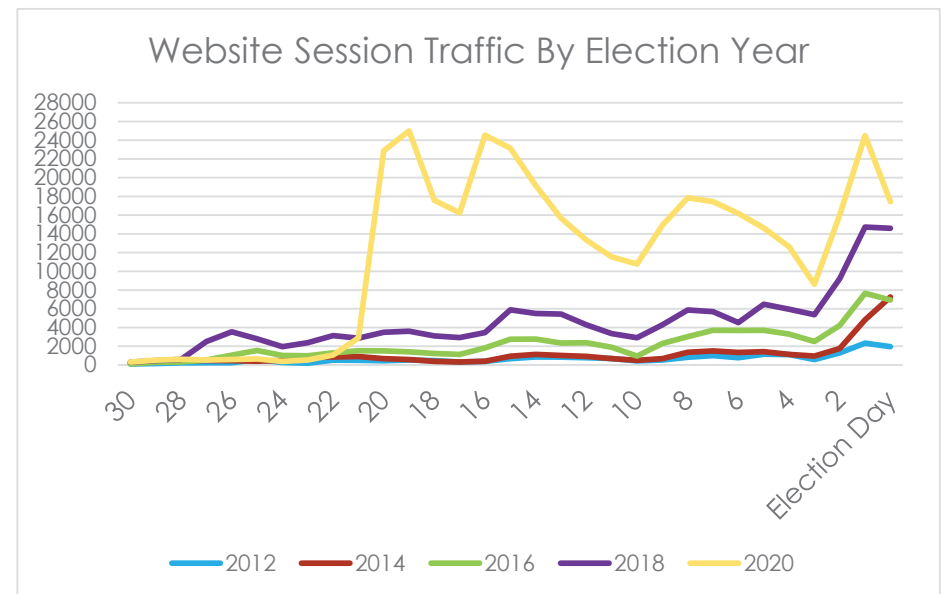
**147%** increase in individual website users.

**124%** increase in website sessions from 2018.

**107,166** impressions from billboards posted across **5** counties.

**200+** lawn signs displayed in **9** counties.

**151** posts and ads on social media, yielding **215,257** impressions.

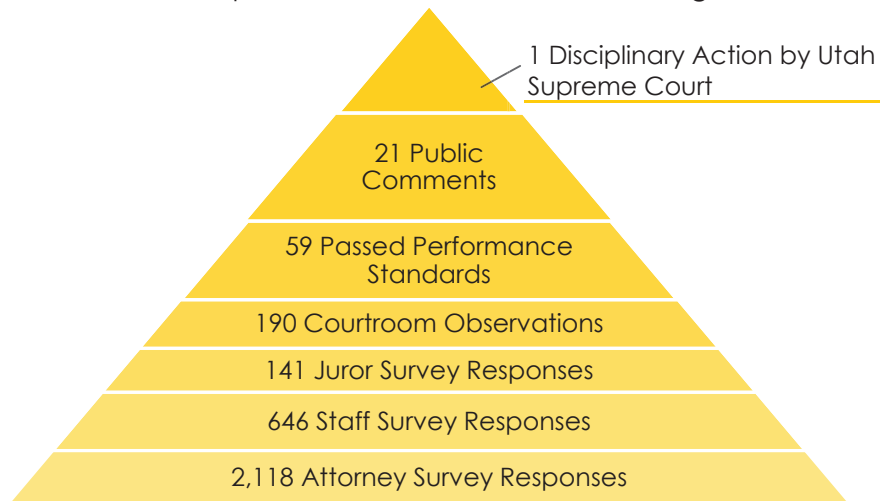


## Did you know?

Judges see their evaluation reports before deciding whether to stand for the retention election. Some choose to resign or retire rather than face a retention election with a negative evaluation.

## 2020 Evaluation Voices

Judge evaluations assemble and rely on the views and experiences of multiple groups that interact with judges. JPEC evaluations completed in 2020 include the following voices:



## Who are the JPEC commissioners?

- ✓ JPEC's 13 volunteer commissioners are social workers, accountants, lawyers, and community leaders who donate their time to a careful evaluation of the data collected on each judge.
- ✓ Commissioners are appointed by Governor Spencer Cox, the Utah Legislature, and the Utah Supreme Court.
- ✓ By law, about half of the membership may be attorneys. Partisan balance is required.



## Work in Progress

**Voter Survey:** During 2020, JPEC conducted a survey to learn what registered voters know about JPEC and judicial retention elections. Key takeaways:

- 1) Over half of respondents know about JPEC;
- 2) 26% plan to use JPEC's information to help them vote; and
- 3) Most want to receive information about judges through a website and a pamphlet that arrives by mail.

The survey will help JPEC to develop action items to raise voter awareness and improve how it provides information to voters.

**Basic Evaluation Pilot:** Judges who have very small caseloads (9%) have historically been difficult and prohibitively expensive to evaluate. In 2020, JPEC tested whether remote observations could provide these judges with accurate, cost-effective evaluations. Final pilot results should be issued by mid-2021; implementation may require legislation.

**Ongoing Evaluations:** With general elections every other year, JPEC's evaluations of judges are ongoing. During 2018 to 2020, it completed the following for the 2020, 2022, and 2024 elections: **18,371** survey invitations sent to Utah attorneys, **3,855** court staff and juvenile court professionals, and **1,563** jurors; Outreach to approximately **20** groups to encourage survey participation; **589** reports made during **834** court observations by **153** volunteer courtroom observers; **28** new courtroom observers were recruited and trained in **4** different sessions; **43** mid-level court observations; **333** public comments submitted by members of the public; **76** midterm evaluation reports completed for judges who will stand for retention in 2022; and **1,427** hours of volunteer service by JPEC commissioners.

Judicial Performance Evaluation Commission  
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