



Justice of the Peace

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WHAT IS A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE?

Justices of the Peace (JP) are municipal appointments. Each municipality has a limited number of appointments usually based on the number of registered voters in the town, except for Waterbury, Meriden, Trumbull, and Litchfield, where the number of JPs is specified in the law. Every four years, the major political parties recommend a slate of people to become Justices. One-third of the JP positions in each town are reserved for voters (a.k.a. electors) who are not members of the major parties, i.e., minor party members or unaffiliated voters. An unaffiliated voter who wishes to become a JP must submit a written application to the town clerk between August 1 and November 1 of a presidential election year (2016, 2020, 2024).

In the colonial period in Connecticut, the principal function of the office was maintenance of order; the justice of the peace had jurisdiction primarily over criminal matters. Limited civil jurisdiction and performance of certain administrative duties, such as marriage ceremonies, were additional functions of this office. With the growth of the Connecticut judicial system, virtually the entire criminal jurisdiction formerly held by the JP has been taken over by other courts. Now the main duties of JPs are performing marriages and administering oaths. Lists of Justices of the Peace are usually available at local Town Clerk's Offices.

For more detailed information on Justice of Peace positions, see the Connecticut Secretary of State's manual: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SOTS/ElectionServices/Handbooks/2021JPManual.pdf>

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SOURCES: Connecticut Secretary of State Justice of Peace Manual

PREPARED BY: 211/ch

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