

JUDGE PAUL A. ROETMAN ('99) was appointed Superior Court Judge for Kotzebue, Alaska by Governor Sean Parnell in August 2010. At age 42, Roetman is the youngest Superior Court judge in the state and the first in 20 years to be appointed directly from a prosecutor position (he formerly served as Assistant District Attorney for Kotzebue and, most recently, Palmer, Alaska).



These unusual circumstances remind Roetman of the Lord's hand in his appointment. "Regent Law's motto states that 'Law is a calling,'" said Roetman. "There is no doubt in my mind that my appointment came about because this is where the Lord wants me."

Alaska's judicial system is merit-based. Attorneys who have actively practiced law in the state for the previous five years may apply for a judgeship. Applicants are reviewed by the 7-member Alaska Judicial Council, which votes to recommend them to the governor. Judge Roetman was selected from a pool of 10 applicants, three of whom made it to the governor's list.

Judge Roetman's place of service is unique by most accounts. Kotzebue is the main hub of Alaska's Northwest Arctic Region and is one of three cities that make up the 2nd Judicial District, an area also known as Bush Alaska since it lacks connection to U.S. roadways. The District is divided among three superior court judges.

Roetman's entire jurisdiction covers a land mass roughly the size of Indiana. With a population of 7,500 residing in the city of Kotzebue and 10 outlying villages, his jurisdiction is considered a "single site judge location." In other words, Roetman is the only judge; a magistrate handles matters normally overseen by a district judge. He is also supported by a law clerk, a judicial assistant, and court staff.

Judge Roetman will serve a 4-year term and face retention election in 2014. If re-elected, his term length will increase to 6 years before his next re-election.