

Fees for Admission
to Federal Court Bars

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FEES FOR ADMISSION TO FEDERAL COURT BARS

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This is a report on fees charged for admission to the attorney bars of federal courts of appeals and federal district courts. It was prepared for a subcommittee on attorney admissions created by the Judicial Conference's standing Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure.¹

Fees for admission to the bars of the courts of appeals range from \$214 to \$300. For the district courts, fees range from \$199 to \$350. State and territory bars charge from no fee to \$50 for certificates of good standing.

The fee for original admission to a federal bar is \$199 plus any additional fee that the local court charges.² The national fee was increased from \$188 to \$199, and the fee for a certificate of good standing from a federal bar was increased from \$20 to \$21, on December 1, 2023.³

The federal government and federal agencies or programs that are funded from judiciary appropriations are exempt from the national fee.⁴ Requirements for practice by federal government attorneys are also constrained by statute:

The Solicitor General, or any officer of the Department of Justice, may be sent by the Attorney General to any State or district in the United States to attend to the interests of the United States in a suit pending in a court of the United States, or in a court of a State, or to attend to any other interest of the United States.

28 U.S.C. § 517.

Some federal-court bars charge periodic renewal fees.

Certificates of Good Standing from State and Territory Bars

Membership in a district court's bar requires proof of membership in another bar, as specified by the court's local rules. Certificates of good standing are proof of bar membership, and the fees charged for them in the states and territories range from no fee to \$50.

1. This report and its appendix, "Compilation of Rules and Fees," are available at www.fjc.gov/content/385023/fees-admission-federal-court-bars.

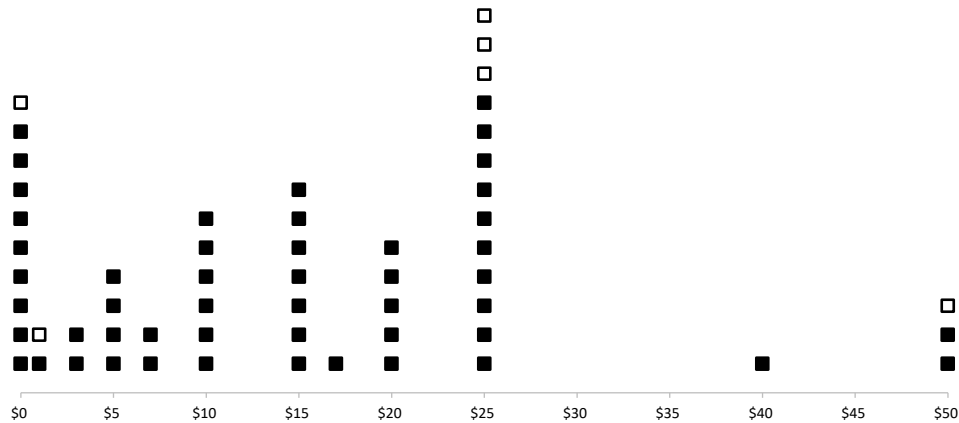
2. Court of Appeals Miscellaneous Fee Schedule, www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/fees/court-appeals-miscellaneous-fee-schedule (item 13); District Court Miscellaneous Fee Schedule, www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/fees/district-court-miscellaneous-fee-schedule (item 10); 28 U.S.C. §§ 1913–1914.

3. Report of the Proceedings of the Judicial Conference of the United States 10–14 (Mar. 14, 2023), www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/jcus_mar_2023_proceedings_final_7-5-23_0.pdf; *see also, e.g.*, Inflationary Increases to Miscellaneous Fee Schedules Effective December 1, 2023, www.ca6.uscourts.gov/sites/ca6/files/OCP-CSO-23-035%20Court%20of%20Appeals%20Miscellaneous%20Fee%20Schedule.pdf.

4. Court of Appeals Miscellaneous Fee Schedule, *supra* note 2; District Court Miscellaneous Fee Schedule, *supra* note 2.

Ten jurisdictions (including American Samoa) charge no fee (18%). Another ten jurisdictions (including Puerto Rico) charge a fee that is less than \$10 (18%). Nineteen jurisdictions charge from \$10 to \$20 (34%), and thirteen jurisdictions (including the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands) charge the most common fee of \$25 (23%). The remaining four jurisdictions (including the Northern Mariana Islands) charge \$40 or \$50 (7%).

Fees for State and Territory Certificates of Good Standing
(states designated with solid markers)



The Federal Courts of Appeals

According to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 46(a)(1), attorneys licensed to practice law in the United States are generally eligible for admission to each circuit’s appellate bar:

An attorney is eligible for admission to the bar of a court of appeals if that attorney is of good moral and professional character and is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States, the highest court of a state, another United States court of appeals, or a United States district court (including the district courts for Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands).

Admission requires (1) submission of an application, (2) motion by a current bar member, and (3) payment of a fee.⁵

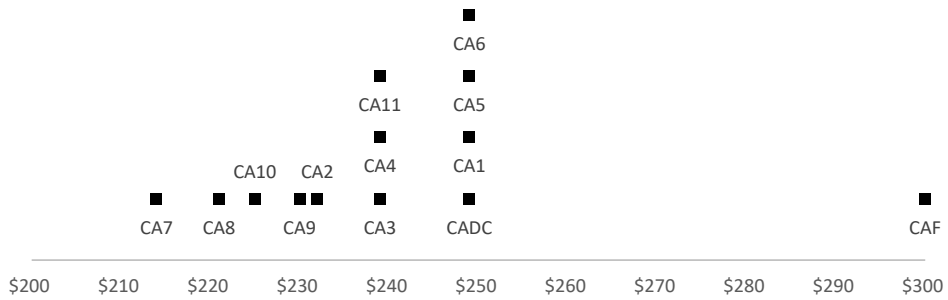
The median bar admission fee is \$239, and the range is from \$214 to \$300.

Bar admission in the Second, Fifth, and Eleventh Circuits is for a term of five years. Renewal fees are \$25, \$50, and \$20, respectively.

Only the Eleventh Circuit’s court of appeals posts a pro hac vice fee (\$50). Only the rules for the District of Columbia, Second, and Fourth Circuits appear to mention pro hac vice appearance.

5. Fed. R. App. P. 46(a)(2)–(3).

Federal Appellate Bar Fees



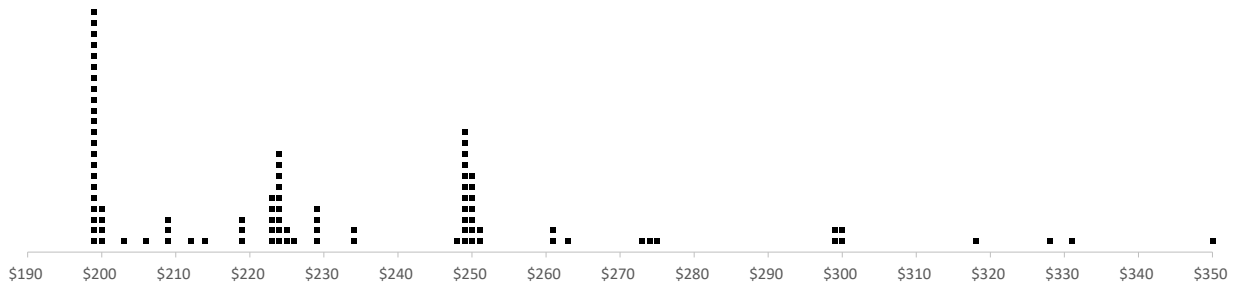
The Federal District Courts

In the district courts, admission fees range from the national minimum of \$199 to \$350. Some districts charge renewal fees up to \$75 per year. Pro hac vice fees range from no fee to \$550.

Admission Fees for New Membership

Admission fees for membership in federal district-court bars range from the national minimum of \$199 (twenty-two districts, or 23%) to \$350 (the District of Guam). Nearly two-fifths of the districts add from \$1 to \$35 to the national fee (thirty-seven districts, or 39%). A little over one-fifth charge about \$250 total (twenty-one districts, or 22%). Six districts charge from \$261 to \$275 (6%), and four charge about \$300 (4%). The four districts with the highest fees charge from \$318 to \$350 (4%).

Federal District-Court Bar Fees



Renewal Fees

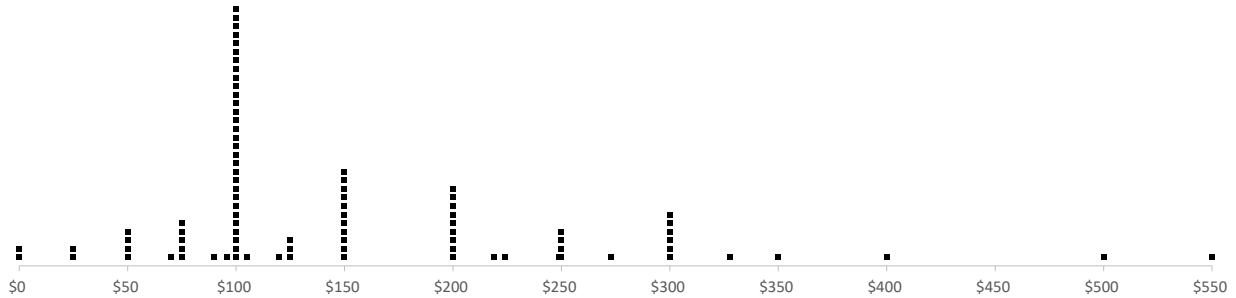
Twenty-five districts (27%) charge dues, often referred to as renewal fees. Renewal periods range from one to six years, and annualized dues range from \$3 to \$75.⁶

6. Alabama Middle (\$10), Alabama Northern (\$10), Alabama Southern (\$10), California Central (\$25), Colorado (\$30), Delaware (\$25), District of Columbia (\$8.33), Florida Middle (\$3), Illinois Southern (\$50), Iowa Northern (\$25), Iowa Southern (\$25), Louisiana Eastern (\$15), Louisiana Middle (\$5), Louisiana Western (\$15), Maryland (\$12.50), Missouri Eastern

Appearance Pro Hac Vice

Thirty districts (32%) charge the most common pro hac vice fee of \$100. Sixteen districts (17%) charge less than that, including two districts with no fee (the Western District of Michigan and the Eastern District of North Carolina). Five districts charge more than \$300.⁷ Three districts charge pro hac vice renewal fees.⁸ Four districts do not permit pro hac vice appearance; their bars are open to members of any state bar.⁹

Federal District-Court Pro Hac Vice Fees



Local-Counsel Requirements

Fifty districts (53%) at least sometimes require participation by local counsel for admission to the district court’s bar, such as by acting as a sponsor.¹⁰

Fourteen districts (15%) at least sometimes require litigation participation by local counsel for some members of the district court’s bar.¹¹

(\$18.75), New Mexico (\$12.50), New York Northern (\$25), North Carolina Eastern (\$9), Northern Mariana Islands (\$15), Puerto Rico (\$75), Texas Southern (\$25), Texas Western (\$8.33), Utah (\$30), and Virgin Islands (\$45).

7. California Central (\$500), California Northern (\$328), Guam (\$400), South Carolina (\$350), and West Virginia Northern (\$550).

8. Guam (\$100 annually), Kentucky Western (\$150 annually), and Louisiana Eastern (\$45 triennially).

9. Colorado (the bar is open to members of a state or territory bar), Illinois Central (the bar is open to members of a state or District of Columbia bar), Michigan Eastern (the bar is open to members of a federal, state, or territory bar), and Wisconsin Eastern (the bar is open to members of a federal, state, or District of Columbia bar).

In addition, the Western District of Michigan allows, but disfavors pro hac vice appearance.

10. Alabama Middle, Alabama Northern, Alabama Southern, Arizona, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia Southern, Guam, Indiana Southern, Kansas, Kentucky Eastern, Kentucky Western, Louisiana Eastern, Louisiana Middle, Louisiana Western, Maine, Maryland, Michigan Eastern, Minnesota, Mississippi Northern, Mississippi Southern, Missouri Western, Nevada, New York Eastern, New York Northern, New York Southern, New York Western, North Carolina Eastern, North Carolina Middle, North Carolina Western, Ohio Northern, Pennsylvania Eastern, Pennsylvania Middle, Pennsylvania Western, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee Eastern, Tennessee Middle, Texas Eastern, Texas Northern, Texas Western, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia Eastern, Virginia Western, Washington Eastern, Washington Western, West Virginia Northern, West Virginia Southern, and Wisconsin Eastern.

11. California Southern, Hawaii, Indiana Northern, Indiana Southern, Michigan Eastern,

A large majority of districts (seventy-two, or 77%) require members of the district court's bar to participate in applications for pro hac vice appearance, or to associate with the appearance itself, at least sometimes.¹² Eighteen districts (19%) do not require participation by local counsel in pro hac vice appearances.¹³ Four districts (4%) do not permit pro hac vice appearances.¹⁴

Government Attorneys

It is common for local rules to specify waiver of fees and mitigated admission requirements for government attorneys. Sometimes this includes state or local government attorneys as well as federal government attorneys. Sometimes this includes federal defender attorneys and sometimes also other attorneys compensated under the Criminal Justice Act. A few courts also specify mitigated requirements for public-interest attorneys. Textual specifications that appear similar may be interpreted differently, and textual specifications that appear different may be interpreted similarly.

Mississippi Northern, Mississippi Southern, Nebraska, Nevada, Northern Mariana Islands, Oklahoma Eastern, Oklahoma Northern, Oklahoma Western, and Tennessee Middle.

12. Alabama Northern, Alabama Southern, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas Eastern, Arkansas Western, California Central, California Eastern, California Northern, California Southern, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida Southern, Georgia Middle, Georgia Northern, Georgia Southern, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois Southern, Indiana Northern, Indiana Southern, Iowa Northern, Iowa Southern, Kansas, Louisiana Eastern, Louisiana Middle, Louisiana Western, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi Northern, Mississippi Southern, Missouri Western, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York Northern, New York Western, North Carolina Eastern, North Carolina Middle, North Carolina Western, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio Southern, Oklahoma Eastern, Oklahoma Northern, Oklahoma Western, Oregon, Pennsylvania Eastern, Pennsylvania Middle, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee Middle, Texas Northern, Texas Western, Utah, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia Eastern, Virginia Western, Washington Eastern, Washington Western, West Virginia Northern, West Virginia Southern, and Wyoming.

13. Alabama Middle, Florida Middle, Florida Northern, Illinois Northern, Kentucky Eastern, Kentucky Western, Michigan Western, Missouri Eastern, New York Eastern, New York Southern, North Dakota, Ohio Northern, Pennsylvania Western, Tennessee Eastern, Tennessee Western, Texas Eastern, Texas Southern, and Wisconsin Western.

14. *See supra* note 9.