

IOP 3.2 | THE CHIEF JUDGE

3.2.1 Duties and Responsibilities

The chief judge serves as the administrative officer of the court and has authority to manage the caseload and the business of the court in accordance with the provisions of rule 2.210(a)(2) of the Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration.

All matters of court policy are to be decided by the active judges on the court. The chief judge shall ensure that the various policies adopted by the judges of the court are given full force and effect. The court may decide court policy on any issue of interest to the court including policies on the selection, retention, employment, promotion, and compensation of employees; court budget; court facilities; or any other matter not governed by the Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration or these Internal Operating Procedures.

3.2.2 Term of Office

The term of the chief judge shall be for two years beginning on July 1 of each odd-numbered year. In the event of a vacancy, a successor shall be chosen promptly to serve the balance of the unexpired term.

3.2.3 Selection

The chief judge shall be selected by the judges of the court on the basis of managerial, administrative, and leadership abilities. Beginning in 2021, nominations for a chief judge designate shall be open on May 1 of each even numbered year and shall close ten days prior to the election which will be held in June of that year. The election shall be by majority vote and the votes shall be cast by secret ballot. Voting by absentee ballot is permitted by notifying the chief judge of the intention to vote absentee and by providing the clerk, prior to the counting of the ballots, a sealed ballot on the uniform ballot form provided by the clerk for that election. The votes will be immediately counted by the clerk, with the assistance of the marshal, and the winner will be immediately announced to the court. The winner will be the judge receiving at least 51% of the votes cast and shall be the chief judge designate until assuming office as the chief judge on July



1st of the following odd numbered year. The number of votes cast for each candidate will not be disclosed.

If no one receives a majority of votes, a run-off election will be conducted between the two judges receiving the most votes on the previous ballot. The absentee ballot will be counted in any runoff election as being cast for the same judge as in the original election if that judge is still a candidate in the runoff election. In the event that no candidate receives a majority vote of all the sitting judges in the run-off election and there are any absentee ballots being cast, then the run-off election will be postponed until such time as the judge(s) casting the absentee ballot(s) have an opportunity to participate.

3.2.4 Assigning Cases to the Chief Judge

In consideration of the administrative responsibilities connected with the office, the chief judge may assign responsibility for the chief judge's desk to any active judge on the court, whether on a rotating or ad hoc basis. In addition, the chief judge may elect up to two of the following reductions to his or her caseload by directing the clerk by written memorandum to:

1. Excuse the chief judge from a writs and motions panel for the period designated;
2. Reduce the chief judge's merits panel assignments as primary judge by up to two cases per case assignment month for months identified. The chief judge's law clerks shall be responsible for aiding the primary judge in the resolution of the reassigned cases, unless the primary judge assigned to the matter affirmatively indicates that assistance from the chief judge's staff is not necessary;
3. Reduce or eliminate the chief judge's merits panel assignments for cases prepared by central staff, including post-conviction cases or the three cases prepared by the writs and motions staff attorneys; or,
4. Assign up to ten of the chief judge's merits panel cases to a senior or an associate judge for one or two merits panel sessions during the calendar year.